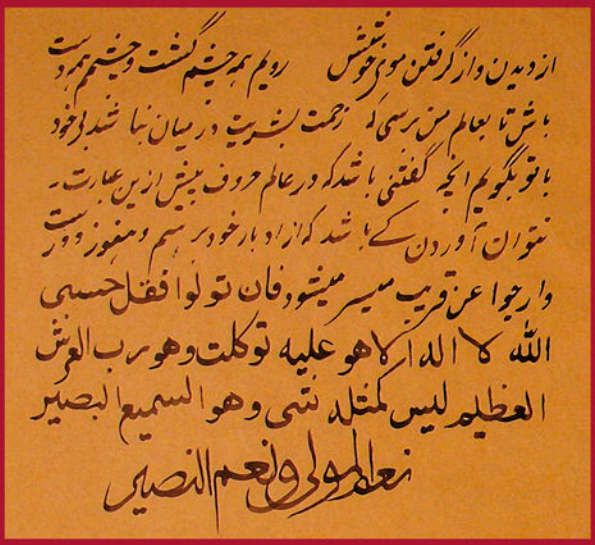
# Beyond Death

## *The Mystical Teachings of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadhānī*



BY

FIROOZEH PAPAN-MATIN

ISLAMIC HISTORY AND CIVILIZATION. STUDIES AND TEXTS

BRILL

# Beyond Death

# Islamic History and Civilization



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## The Mystical Teachings of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadhānī

*By*

Firoozeh Papan-Matin


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*On the cover*: The concluding lines of the Tamhīdāt from an undated manuscript copy (author's personal copy).

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*To Cole*

CONTENTS

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# INTRODUCTION

The present work is an analysis of the teachings of the twelfth-century Iranian mystic Abū al-Maʿālī ʿAbdallāh ibn Abī Bakr Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī al-Miyānjī, known as ʿAyn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadhānī. This famous Persian mystic was born in Hamadhān in A.H. 490 or 492 (A.D. 1096/1098) and was executed in the same town in 525/1131 on the charge of heresy.[1] Hamadhān in northwest Iran, on the route connecting Khurāsān and Baghdād, was a major cultural center in medieval Persia and the home of many scholars. It took pride in having been the home of the philosopher Avicenna (A.D. 980–1037) whom ʿAyn al-Quḍāt held in high regard. Although no biographical records from the time of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt survive, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's extant works, as well as references to him by later authors, provide some information on his life and thought.[2] During his short life he composed books and treatises on a number of subjects ranging from mysticism to mathematics, natural sciences, grammar and semantics, Arabic literature, commentary on the *Qurʾān*, and the nature of prophecy. Most of these works were written in Arabic, the scholarly language of Islam. Only his works on mysticism survived the Mongol invasion of the thirteenth century. Our knowledge of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's learning and influence is limited to what we can deduce from his treatises and personal letters. The letters follow the question and answer (*masāʾil wa ajwiba*) literary tradition of medieval times; they present the questions posed to ʿAyn al-Quḍāt by his associates and disciples. The letters provide insight into ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's immediate intellectual milieu and the nature of the issues and debates that concerned its members.

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[1] All translations from other languages to English are mine unless indicated otherwise. Source citations appear where the original text is mentioned and not at the end of the English translation. For English translations by others the citation note is placed at the end of the translated quotation. All transliterations from Arabic and Persian are based on the model provided in the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. When transliterating Arabic terms and names, I have followed the Arabic table of sounds, while with Persian words and names I have adhered to the Persian.

[2] ʿAyn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadhānī, "*Sakwa-l-Garib ʿAni l-ʾawtan ʿila ʿUlamāʾ-l-Buldān*," translated and edited by Mohammed ben Abd el-Jalil in *Journal Asiatique* (Janvier-Mars, 1930): 4–6.

ʿAyn al-Quḍāt came from a family of renowned *shāfiʿī* jurists, and like his father and grandfather before him, he held lectures for his disciples and had a wide following in Hamadhān and among some of the Saljūq court nobles.[3] Nevertheless, he did not define himself in terms of any specific creed, nor did his views on faith adhere to the orthodox interpretations of Islam and the *Qurʾān*. He wrote about all religions as different paths that led one to God.[4] Enjoying a solid scholarly background in Islamic religious sciences, he took issue with the perspective that interpreted faith through the teachings of the *sharīʿa*. He explained that *sharīʿa* promoted "habitude" (*ʿādat*) and abiding by preconceived notions of the "unseen" (*ʿālam al-ghayb*).[5] The complexity of thought and expression encountered in his writing poses a great challenge to the reader and requires careful analysis.

Scholarship on ʿAyn al-Quḍāt is limited. The most famous medieval commentary on his *Tamhīdāt* (Introductions), written by Muḥammad al-Ḥusaynī Abū al-Fatḥ Ṣadr al-Dīn Walī Akbar Ṣādiq (720–825/1321–1422) known as Khawājah Banda Nawāz Gīsūdarāz, is an elaboration on selected passages of the original text—a common practice among medieval commentators. Gīsūdarāz was a venerated Chishtī shaykh and an exceptional scholar whose views on ʿAyn al-Quḍāt provide insight on how he was received among Indian Muslim mystics. Contemporary scholarship on ʿAyn al-Quḍāt is limited but interesting. Most of these works were written after the 1930s, when Mohammed ben Abd el-Jalil published ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's defense treatise, *Shakwā al-Gharīb ʿan al-Awṭān ilā ʿUlamāʾal-Buldān* (The Complaint of a Stranger Exiled from Home to the Scholars of the Lands).[6] In 1960s, ʿAfif ʿUsayrān and ʿAlīnaqī Munzavī edited ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's corpus. These contributions have encouraged scholarship on ʿAyn al-Quḍāt.

In the following chapters I shall elaborate themes mainly taken from the *Tamhīdāt*—generally considered ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's *magnum opus*—and I shall also utilize his other works. The *Tamhīdāt* describes an esoteric kind of "knowing," which reflects ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's

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[3] The *shāfiʿī* school of jurisprudence is attributed to Al-Shāfiʿī (A.D. 767–820). His genealogy identifies him as both a Qurayshī and a relative of the Prophet as attested in his name: Al-Imām Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad ibn Idrīs ibn al-ʿAbbās ibn ʿUthmān ibn Shāfiʿ ibn al-Sāʿib ibn ʿUbayd ibn ʿAbd Yazīd ibn Hāshim ibn al-Muṭṭalib ibn ʿAbd Manāf ibn Quṣayy al-Qurashī.

[4] ʿAyn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadhānī, *Tamhīdāt*, 4th ed., edited by ʿAfīf ʿUsayrān (Tehran: Manūchehrī, 1991), pp. 21–22; henceforth cited as *Tamhīdāt*.

[5] Ibid., sec. 419, pp. 320–21.

[6] Henceforth referred to as *Shakwā al-Gharīb*.

intimations on the unseen. The unseen (*ghayb*) is the mystery of God and His hidden realm. This realm is inaccessible to human reason and is thus unknowable. Moreover, attributes concealed within the *ghayb* are normally hidden from men. God reveals these attributes to men only as He wishes. The *Qurʾān* is one such instance. In ʿAyn al-Quḍāt the unseen consists of innumerable "worlds" that are experienced intermittently by the wayfarer. These realms become accessible to the wayfarer after he has experienced "mystical death" (*mawt-i maʿnawī*). Mystical death is not synonymous with annihilation (*fanāʾ*); it is the preliminary stage before *fanāʾ*. It is the stage when the consciousness of the wayfarer is transcended but not annihilated and is in the consciousness that he perceives to be the consciousness of God. My research demonstrates how, in the work of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, knowledge of the unseen and death are interconnected. My methodology in approaching this theme is based on ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's treatment of death in his own writing with a focus on the *Tamhīdāt*. I consider death and gnosis through an intertextual reading of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's texts. I use secondary references in order to create a context for his views on these subjects.

My discussion is organized in six chapters, as follows. In the first chapter, I provide an overview of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's life and discuss works by him and works about him. Most of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's early writings are lost. The authorship of some of the texts that are attributed to him is open to dispute, but scholars agree that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt is the undisputed author of the *Tamhīdāt* (Introductions), *Zubdat al-Ḥaqāʾiq* (The Essence of Reality), *Maktūbāt* (Letters), and *Shakwā al-Gharīb ʿan al-Awṭān ilā ʿUlamāʾ al-Buldān* (The Complaint of a Stranger Exiled from Home to the Scholars of the Lands). These are the main texts that I have used.

In the first chapter I also refer to ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's own death and discuss the primary sources that describe his imprisonment and execution. Very little is known about ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's personal life, and information on his death is limited. His defense treatise, *Shakwā al-Gharīb*, which he composed during his imprisonment in Baghdād, is a valuable resource. This document is an apologia that contains information on the author's life and works, some of which have been lost to us. It also tells us about the charge of heresy that was brought against him.

The second chapter concerns the discussions that ensued after ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's release from prison. His apologia aroused strong reactions

among some of his students and associates who were not able to justify his appeals for freedom. They saw a contradiction between ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's earlier resolve on death and his later plea for freedom and return to his homeland Hamadhān. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt responded to these objections by explaining that the exile and the captivity that the *Shakwā al-Gharīb* refers to are a metaphoric intimation of the forlorn state of the soul. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt turns to the familiar topoi of homeland and exile that appear in mystical literature in order to explain his physical imprisonment at the hands of his adversaries. His plight is reminiscent of the incarceration of other significant thinkers who used prison as an occasion to contemplate the existential predicament of man. Accordingly, this chapter provides a comparison between ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's defense, Plato's *Apology* for Socrates, and the visionary recitals of Avicenna. These works were produced while their authors, who were incarcerated by state authorities, reflected on the imprisonment of the soul in the realm of matter.

The third chapter provides an analysis of death as a state of consciousness, as discussed by ʿAyn al-Quḍāt. In the *Tamhīdāt*, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt explains that he has experienced death while alive and refers to this condition as "mystical death." In this context, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's understanding of death is not in accord with Islam's classical interpretation of death. The *Tamhīdāt* is an essential text in my research because it focuses on ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's treatment of mystical death and provides an epistemology of the lights that appear to the wayfarer after he has experienced this kind of death. As I will explain in chapter three, the lights that he sees after death represent God's attributes and are the manifestation of the non-comparable light of God. Although ʿAyn al-Quḍāt does not explain how he prepares for mystical death, he elaborates on the consciousness that he attains in this state and further describes this consciousness in relation to his visionary experiences.

ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's discussions are significant because they depict death as both a personal as well as a cosmological event that is continuous. To invoke death and to rush forth greeting it, as is the case with ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, is an entanglement with one's own self. Death is an individual experience because it involves no one else but the person who is undergoing the experience. Moreover, death delimits one's response to the inescapability of the single most inevitable occurrence in life. Death finds cosmological dimensions for those who, like ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, believe in the existence of the *ghayb* and see death as the

threshold to it. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt considers death to be a path that takes a person to his or her humanity. In the *Tamhīdāt* he refers to an out-of-body experience of death, which has brought him in contact with infinite realms of knowledge. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt claims to have based his insights on personal experience of the realms past death. Accordingly, his writing is filled with discussions about this form of death and this kind of gnosis. In the *Tamhīdāt*, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt sets forth a detailed analysis of the relationship between death, knowledge, and identity. Just as the soul experiences special worldly realms that are called "being in this world" (*ḥuḍūr)*, it experiences other special realms that are called "realms of the tomb" (*aḥwāl-i gūr*), and "realms of doomsday" (*aḥwāl-i qiyāmat*). It is through death, in the latter sense, that the soul journeys on into these realms. Mystics who have experienced death while still living in the world of matter come to see realms of the tomb and of doomsday and go beyond these into unforeseen territories.

ʿAyn al-Quḍāt discusses death, the unseen, and consciousness by means of an eschatology that has its genesis in a structured dualism. The fourth chapter will develop this subject. It will examine ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's discussion of the spectrum of lights he saw while in the special realm of experience. These lights become discernible as the wayfarer enters the realm of death. They convey God's attributes of "mercy" and "might" through the lights of Muḥammad and Satan. These lights and their juxtaposition are among the mysteries that are unveiled to the wayfarer. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt establishes this dualism by means of color metaphors and visions of good and evil. He explains that in the realm of God's attributes there are two lights: sunlight and moonlight. Sunlight comes from the Prophet Muḥammad and moonlight from Satan. Sunlight is the "shadow" of God, and moonlight reflects the light of the sun.[7] The world of natural elements is a reflection of this dualistic "shadow play." Placed against this background, man holds a distinct place: he contains both "light" and "shadow." He is light since he is the depository of the light of God; and he is shadow because, as a human, he is enclosed in the frame of body and flesh. This discussion provides the key to ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's perspectives on good and evil; creation, generation, corruption, and death; humanity; and the nature of prophecy.

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*Tamhīdāt*, sec. 272–73, pp. 212–13, and sec. 326, p. 248.

Chapter five evaluates the reception of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt among his contemporaries and successors. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's discussions on the attributes of God and the wayfarer's position in relation to the lights convey his understanding of death as a process of self-identification. His views on eschatology and the unseen are referred to by mystics after him. Rūzbihān Baqlī (A.D. 1128–1209) and Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī (A.D. 1154–1191), who lived close to ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's time, aspired to his views on this subject. Najm al-Dīn Rāzī (A.D. 1177–1256) also referred to ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's mystical doctrines. However, in general, mystics of the Arab and the Iranian worlds who came after ʿAyn al-Quḍāt were wary of discussing him openly and extensively since the Saljūq state had called him a heretic and ordered his death. Chapter five will evaluate the legacy of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt with special attention to his reception among the early Indian Chishtī scholars. Khawāja Banda Nawāz Gīsūdarāz and his contemporary mystic Masʿūd Bakk are particularly important in this discussion. Gīsūdarāz utilized ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's teachings in training his own disciples. In fact, he considered ʿAyn al-Quḍāt to be so profound and complex that he deemed the novices among his students incapable of approaching his texts or his ideas. Therefore, Gīsūdarāz forbade his beginning students access to the *Tamhīdāt* and used this text only in teaching his advanced disciples. Gīsūdarāz's detailed and elaborate commentary, *Sharḥ-i Tamhīdāt*, is intended for such readers among the Chishtīs.

Chapter six concerns itself with *samāʿ*, listening to music in order to connect with the spiritual realms. As a spiritual practice, *samāʿ* was the subject of controversial debates during the medieval-period. Those who vouched for *samāʿ* considered it an opportunity to approach God. Its opponents, however, emphasized the role of Satan in inciting fancies during *samāʿ* that led the faithful astray. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and his teacher Aḥmad Ghazzālī were famous for both their adherence to *samāʿ* and the literature that they produced on this subject. Aḥmad Ghazzālī's treatise *Bawāriq al-Ilmāʿ fī al-Radd ʿAlā Man Yuḥarrimu al-Samāʿ* (The Lightning-Flashes of Indication Concerning the Refutation of Those Who Declare Audition Forbidden in General) was received as a classical manifesto in defense of *samāʿ*.[8] The early Chishtīs followed the discussions of these mystics in giving shape to their understanding of *samāʿ*.

[8] Henceforth referred to as *Bawāriq al-Ilmāʿ*.

In conclusion, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt argues that the visionary apperception of the unseen calls into question the categorical confidence we place in the rational processes of cognition, reason, and the individual's articulation of the self in relation to faith. The incommensurability of the realities that the mystic observes through death call attention to the individuality of the mystic/wayfarer: namely, the "position" of the wayfarer as he travels the mystical path and his manner of "walking" the path. This subject can be approached in different relationships and in the context of the wayfarer's response to the mysteries that are unveiled to him. These include his perception of the lights that he sees, as well as his understanding and response to the manifestation of God's attributes.

The present volume sets forth ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's discussion on these subjects through his understanding of mystical death and its accompanying mode of perception. Death takes the wayfarer away from his position of certitude in regard to ontological truths to a realm of consciousness where he experiences mysteries of the unseen as new and ever-extending processes. The confluence of his consciousness and these spectacles of protean truths signifies the mutability of the position of the wayfarer apropos himself in the capacity of a "knowing," "self-sufficient" subject. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt explains his mystical insights in terms of lights whose function, as he declares in the beginning of the *Tamhīdāt*, is to assert the existence of a hidden truth. He explains that the wayfarer understands the "reality" past "appearance" as he ventures through the gate of mysteries and goes beyond what lies therein: "If you set out, you arrive, and you see." But the extensions of this reality are beyond comprehension because they are the reflection of the light of God, which constitutes all of creation and is infinitely unfolding. And yet, to set one's self in motion, to go, to arrive, and to see, is indeed a mystery contingent upon a "going" that is a relentless "seeing" and "arriving." He defines these realities as manifestations of the light of God and describes "seeing" as a mode of understanding the unseen (*ghayb)*. The wayfarer who experiences these realities, like the prophets, is among God's select human beings.

CHAPTER ONE

# ʿAYN AL-QUḌĀT'S LIFE, HERITAGE, AND HERESY

There are no biographical records from ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's time that tell us about his personal life. The later sources on him are scant and limited to general remarks on his untimely death, his father, and his grandfather. The medieval sources on him are ʿImād al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī (519–97/1125–1201), the author of *Kharīdat al-Qaṣr wa Jarīdat al-ʿAṣr fī Dhikr Fuḍalāʾ Ahl Fārs* (The Unbored Pearl of the Palace and Account-Book of the Age: An Account of the Eminent Men of Persia), and Muḥammad Abū al-Fatḥ Ṣadr al-Dīn Walī Akbar Ṣādiq, known as Khawājah Banda Nawāz Gīsūdarāz. ʿImād al-Dīn provides a thought-provoking short account on ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's execution,[9] whereas Gīsūdarāz analyzes major themes in the *Tamhīdāt*.[10]

Modern scholarship on ʿAyn al-Quḍāt is limited but useful. It falls into two categories: translations of his works into other languages and analyses of his ideas. In the twentieth century, the Moroccan scholar Mohammed ben Abd el-Jalil edited and published ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's defense treatise, *Shakwā al-Gharīb ʿan al-Awṭān ilā ʿUlamāʾ al-Buldān* (The Complaint of a Stranger Exiled from Home to the Scholars of the Lands), with an introduction and a French translation.[11] After Abd el-Jalil, ʿAfīf ʿUsayrān and ʿAlīnaqī Munzavī edited and published, for the first time, the author's personal letters, the *Maktūbāt*.[12] ʿAfīf ʿUsayrān also has produced critical editions of other writings by ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, *Zubdat al-Ḥaqāʾiq*, *Tamhīdāt*, *Shakwā al-Gharīb*,[13] and

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[9] ʿImad al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī, *Kharīdat al-Qaṣr wa Jarīdat al-ʿAṣr fī Dhikr Fuḍalāʾ Ahl Fārs*, vol. 3, edited by ʿAdnān Muḥammad Āl-i Ṭuʿma (Tehran: Markaz-i Nashr al-Trāth al-Makhṭūṭ, 1999), pp. 137–38.

[10] *Tamhīdāt*, pp. 355–417.

[11] ʿAyn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadhānī, "*Sakwa-l-Garib ʿAni l-ʿawtan ʿila ʿUlamā-l-Buldān*," translated and edited by Mohammed ben Abd el-Jalil in *Journal Asiatique* (Janvier-Mars, 1930), pp. 4–297.

[12] ʿAyn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadhānī, *Maktūbāt*, 2nd ed., vols. 1–2, edited by ʿAfīf ʿUsayrān and ʿAlīnaqī Munzavī (Tehran: Manūchehrī, 1983); vol. 3, edited by ʿAlīnaqī Munzavī (Tehran: Asāṭīr, 1998). Henceforth cited as *Maktūbāt* and the corresponding volume number.

[13] ʿAyn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadhānī, *Muṣannafāt*, edited by ʿAfīf ʿUsayrān (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Dānishgāh-i Tehran, 1962).

ʿUsayrān published an annotated edition of the *Tamhīdāt* as his Ph.D. dissertation in 1962.[14] His edition is accompanied by a comprehensive introduction to ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and the *Tamhīdāt*. It is divided into three sections (1) *Introducing the Writings of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt* (2) *ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's Life*, and (3) *ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's Philosophical Ideas*. In these chapters, ʿUsayrān provides a background on ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's works, his teachers as well as his teachings, his mystical unveilings and miracles, and his views on knowledge and its acquisition. ʿUsayrān's research, which appeared almost thirty years after the publication of *Shakwā al-Gharīb* by Mohammed ben Abd el-Jalil, revitalized the scholarship on ʿAyn al-Quḍāt. In the years following the first publication of the *Tamhīdāt*, ʿUsayrān and his colleague ʿAlīnaqī Munzavī's work stimulated the development of invaluable scholarship on ʿAyn al-Quḍāt.

In his work on Ḥusayn ibn Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj (d. A.D. 922), Louis Massignon (A.D. 1883–1962) refers to ʿAyn al-Quḍāt as the disciple of Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Ghazzālī (d. A.D. 1126), who was influenced by the teachings of Ḥallāj.[15] Massignon is most interested in ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's interpretation of Satan. In his classical work *En Islam Iranien*, *Aspects Spirituels et Philosophiques*, Henry Corbin (A.D. 1903–78) mentioned ʿAyn al-Quḍāt in a footnote as the favorite disciple of Aḥmad Ghazzālī.[16] Corbin and Fritz Meier mention ʿAyn

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[14] ʿAyn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadhānī, "*Tamhīdāt*" in *Muṣannafāt-i ʿAyn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadhānī*, edited by ʿAfīf ʿUsayrān (Tehran: Tehran University Press, 1962), pp. 1–528.

[15] Aḥmad Ghazzālī is best known for his treatise *Sawāniḥ*, which was edited and published by Helmut Ritter in 1942. His other writings consist of sermons, treatises, and commentaries on the work of his elder brother Muḥammad, and a treatise on *samāʿ*, which is discussed at length in the final chapter of this book. The following is a list of his writings: *Tajrīd fī Kalimāt al-Tawḥīd*, *Risālat al-Ṭayr*, *Majālis*, and *Bawāriq al-Ilmāʿ fī al-Radd ʿAlā Man Yuḥarrimu al-Samāʿ*. Adhering to the teachings of al-Ḥallāj, he defended Satan as a forlorn lover of God.

[16] Henry Corbin, *En Islam Iranien*, *Aspects Spirituels et Philosophiques*, vol. 4 (Paris: Gallimard, 1972), p. 402n81. Here, in a discussion on "the heavenly witness," Corbin refers the reader to his other work *L'homme de Lumière dans le Soufisme Iranien* where ʿAyn al-Quḍāt is again mentioned in passing with an additional reference to Fritz Meier. Fritz Meier, *Die Fawāʾiḥ al-Ǧamāl wa-Fawātiḥ al-Ǧalāl des Naǧm ad-Dīn al-Kubrā* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1957), p. 114n1. Meier refers to the following passage in the *Tamhīdāt* (sec. 397, p. 303):

> At this stage I, who am ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, saw a light that separated from him and a light that emerged from me. The two lights ascended and joined and became a beautiful visage such that I was left bewildered in this state for some time. "Indeed there is a market in paradise where forms are bought" is the meaning of this.

al-Quḍāt in the discussion on the "heavenly witness" (*shāhid*) that is elaborated in the mysticism of Rūzbihān Baqlī and Najm al-Dīn al-Kubrā (d. A.D. 1221).[17]

Following Abd el-Jalil's 1930 French translation of *Shakwā al-Gharīb*, in 1969 A.J. Arberry (A.D. 1905–69) provided an English translation of the text titled *A Sufi Martyr: The Apology of ʿAin al-Qudat al-Hamadani*. In recent years, Christiane Tortel has translated the *Tamhīdāt* into French.[18] Najīb Māyīl Hirawī, along with a few others, have also produced works on ʿAyn al-Quḍāt.[19] Hamid Dabashi's *Truth and Narrative: The Untimely Thoughts of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadhānī* offers a post-structuralist reading of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt.[20] Dabashi's project highlights ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's self-conscious approach to writing as an activity. Dabashi argues that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt is acutely aware of writing as a staging of ideas and a mode of presenting them. In one of his personal letters, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, mockingly, compares himself to the poets and declares "The best poetry is the most untrue and the verbose is the twin of the poets".[21]

Although ʿAyn al-Quḍāt has received attention in recent years, the scholarship on him is still new. Essentially, Abd el-Jalil, ʿUsayrān, and Munzavī are the first to have studied ʿAyn al-Quḍāt exclusively. In their research, they consult the same medieval references for information on ʿAyn al-Quḍāt.[22] These medieval sources, including the author's own writings, provide insufficient information on his personal life. Consequently, certain aspects of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's life, such as his family relations and the specifics of his execution, are unknown. In the following discussion I have consulted ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's

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[17] Fritz Meier, *Die Fawāʾiḥ*, p. 114.

[18] ʿAyn al-Quzât Hamadâni, *Les Tentations Métaphysiques (Tamhidât)*, translated by Christiane Tortel (Paris: Les Deux Océans, 1992).

[19] Najīb Māyīl Hirawī, *Khāṣīyyat-i Āyīnagī: Naqd-i Ḥāl, Guzāra-yi Ārāʾ wa Guzīda-yi Āthār-i Fārsī-yi ʿAyn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadānī* (Tehran: Nashr-i Nay, 1995).

[20] Hamid Dabashi, *Truth and Narrative: The Untimely Thoughts of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadhānī* (Surrey: Curzon, 1999); henceforth cited as Dabashi, *Truth and Narrative*.

[21] *Maktūbāt*, vol. 2, letter 98, p. 356.

[22] The medieval scholars who refer to ʿAyn al-Quḍāt include Żahīr al-Dīn al-Bayhaqī (A.H. 499–565), ʿAbd al-Karīm ibn Muḥammad al-Samʿānī (A.H. 506–62), ʿImād al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī (A.H. 519–597), Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī (A.H. 574–626), ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Fawāṭī (A.H. 642–723), ʿAbd al-Wahāb al-Subkī (A.H. 727–71), Muḥammad ʿAbū al-Fatḥ Ṣadr al-Dīn Walī Akbar Ṣādiq (d. A.H. 825) and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Jāmī (A.H. 817–98).

own writings, the secondary sources mentioned above, and the medieval biographies that refer to him.

## *ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's Lineage*

The little we know about his personal life indicates that he came from a well-known family from Miyānjī, a small town between Zanjān and Hamadhān in Azarbāyjān.[23] The author of *Muʿjam al-Buldān*, Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, refers to ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's family in his discussion on Miyānjī, which he himself had visited. Yāqūt describes ʿAyn al-Quḍāt as a scholar and man of letters, and refers to his father and grandfather as renowned judges. We know that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt was born in Hamadhān but the exact date of his birth is open to dispute. In his writings, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt never refers to himself by his name, ʿAbdallāh, nor does he identify with his family's city of origin Miyānjī. He calls himself ʿAyn al-Quḍāt. I have not seen any biographer explain the etymology of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's honorary name or explain in what sense this name applies to him since we do not have any evidence that he held the position of a judge. This name seems to have some relation to the fact of his genealogy: both his father and grandfather were judges and it could mean he is the eye of the judges or the visionary (eye) who was born to these other judges. The nickname itself could mean the source for the judges, or the very eye of the judges, or someone who is above the judges to whom they should look. It could also mean a holy warrior who died for his convictions. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt refers to himself by this name and expresses pride in his hometown of Hamadhān.

Like Yāqūt, ʿAbd al-Karīm ibn Muḥammad al-Samʿānī, the author of *Kitāb al-Ansāb*, refers to ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's family under the entry on the city of al-Miyānjī.[24] Al-Samʿānī does not mention ʿAyn al-Quḍāt but talks about his father, Abū Bakr Muḥammad, and grandfather, ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥasan, as learned scholars and judges from Miyānjī. According to al-Samʿānī, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's grandfather was famous not only in his hometown but also in Baghdād where he had studied jurisprudence with a number of renowned scholars.[25] Both al-Samʿānī and Yāqūt

[23] Mohammed ben Abd el-Jalil, "La šakwā"; in *Journal Asiatique* (Janvier-Mars, 1930), pp. 6–7; henceforth cited as Abd el-Jalil, *La šakwā*. Abd el-Jalil, ʿAfīf ʿUsayrān, and others after them, have referred to the sources discussed here.

[24] ʿAbd al-Karīm ibn Muḥammad al-Samʿānī, *Kitāb al-Ansāb*, vol. 4 (Beirut: 1999), pp. 381–82.

[25] Ibid.

state that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's grandfather, ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥasan, had died a violent death (*ʿustushhida)*.[26] Whereas Yāqūt reports his death without any further explanation,[27] al-Samʿānī explains that he died in his own mosque in the morning of the month of *shawwāl* 471/1079 in an "agitation" (*ʿaṣabīyya)*.[28] This word could also mean "disturbance" or a social upheaval; therefore, it is not clear if al-Samʿānī is referring to a private feud or a civil upheaval. The contemporary scholar Mohammed ben Abd el-Jalil makes an observation about the alleged "martyrdom" of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's grandfather. In his footnote on this discussion,[29] Abd el-Jalil explains that the word "*ustushhida*," which is used by medieval historians in reference to the death of ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥasan, does not necessarily convey the sense of dying or being put to death on account of one's religious convictions. The word can refer to any unnatural death that results from accident, depression, or even seasickness. Considering Abd el-Jalil's observation and the fact that very little is known about ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's family and family relations, it would be wise to be cautious in entertaining the assumption that "martyrdom," in its familiar sense, was the fate of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's grandfather.

Al-Samʿānī describes ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's father as a "handsome judge" who in the company of his father attended lectures by prominent scholars and was introduced to sophisticated teachings at an early age.[30] As a parent, Abū Bakr Muḥammad held an intimate intellectual relationship with his son. He appreciated ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's ideas and held an important place in his life. At one point in the *Tamhīdāt*, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt describes his father among his circle of associates at a gathering as follows:

> I know you have heard this story: one night, my father and I, and a group of the *imām*s [religious leaders] from our city were at the house of the mystic Muqaddam. We were dancing and Abū Saʿīd Tirmidhī was singing some verses. My father was staring. Then he said: "I saw master Aḥmad Ghazzālī dancing with us and his attire was such and such," giving a description.[31]

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[26] Ibid.

[27] Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Muʿjam al-Buldān*, p. 2848, in www.alwarq.com, accessed February 14, 2003.

[28] Al-Samʿānī, *Kitāb al-Ansāb*, 4: 382.

[29] Abd el-Jalil, *La šakwā*, pp. 6–7.

[30] Al-Samʿānī, *Kitāb al-Ansāb*, 4: 381–82.

[31] *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 328, pp. 250–51.

ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's father was intimately involved in the life of his son and took part in his visionary world. In this instance, he and the others were in the state of expansion *(basṭ)* when he had a vision of his son's deceased teacher Aḥmad Ghazzālī. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt describes his father among the intimate friends of God who share in the gifts of prophetic insight.[32] These gifts that he identifies as the qualities of prophethood come in three categories: (1) exceptional abilities such as reviving the dead (2) visionary knowledge of the affairs of the doomsday and heaven and hell, and (3) knowledge of the affairs of the unseen in the state of wakefulness. This is the context in which he repeats the story of his father among the dancing mystics as evidence that he is among those who partake of prophetic gifts such as visionary insights in the state of wakefulness.[33]

> My father is also such a person. One day, he was standing on his feet as I and a group of the equitables were at the house of mystic Muqaddam. We were dancing and Abū Saʿīd Tarshīzī was singing some verses. My father, wide awake, said: "I saw master Aḥmad Ghazzālī dancing with you and his attire was such and such." He was awake when he said that, not asleep. But I did not see that, nor did the others. What is your reaction if someone said the judge who keeps usurping the wealth of the others and is deceitful, this noble state does not happen to him? Did my father have any doubt about what he saw? Did he have any doubt about this state? At this juncture, he perceived with certainty how Muḥammad saw Gabriel and the others did not. But, my father saw this once. There are some to whom this state occurs ten times a day. One cannot question God as for the reason why He has given this providence to one and not to another. Even if they ask, what is the outcome?[34]

ʿAyn al-Quḍāt explains that his father experienced an "event," which here means the state of connecting with the unseen. The ability to have visions of the unseen can apply to anyone among humans, good or bad, as God desires. The reference to the deceitful and the corrupt is to explain the gradations to metaphysical abilities and also to emphasize that God's plans are mysterious. His father is among the select who are comparable to the Prophet when he saw Gabriel.

ʿAyn al-Quḍāt is said to have had a son named Aḥmad but we do not have any further information about his family life. He refers to a person named Aḥmad as "my son" a few times in the *Maktūbāt*. It is

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[32] *Maktūbāt*, vol. 1, sec. 620–24, pp. 373–75.
[33] Ibid., sec. 624, pp. 374–75.
[34] Ibid.

not clear if he is using "my son" as a term of endearment or he actually had a son whom he identified as Aḥmad. When he mentions this person, he describes him as a mature man in charge of important responsibilities and describes their meetings as special occasions. If in fact Aḥmad is his son, these instances indicate that he seemed to have not spent very much time with his family although they all lived in Hamadhān. Rather, he was in the company of his fellow mystics whom, as his letters explain, he addressed in an intimate tone of camaraderie, using proverbs and colloquial language to respond to their equally intimate diction, amidst serious theological discussions. There is no surviving information on ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's mother. The only instance when he makes an allusion to her is in his *Shakwā al-Gharīb*, when he expresses nostalgia for the hometown where he had been "suckled at the breast."

> Ah, would I knew if ever more
> My eyes shall light upon where soar
> The summits of the massifs twain
> Of Arwand, hard by Hamadhan!
>
> That land where amulets were hung
> About my neck, when I was young,
> And I was suckled at the breast.[35]

The exact date of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's birth is equally enigmatic. Hagiographers and historians have determined ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's date of birth in relation to the date of his execution, May 23, 1131 (23rd of the month *Jumādā* II, A.H. 525). They have compared his age at the time of writing the *Shakwā al-Gharīb*, which the author states as thirty–three years old, with his date of execution.[36] We know that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt completed the *Shakwā al-Gharīb* while he was in prison in Baghdād. He was later released from prison and returned to Hamadhān but he was once again arrested and this time sent to the gallows. It has been assumed that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt was executed shortly after his release from the Baghdād prison; therefore, it has been presumed that he was born in 492/1098, or thirty–three years earlier than the date of his execution. However, there are no records that indicate when, exactly,

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[35] ʿAyn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadhānī, *A Sufi Martyr: The Apology of ʿAin al-Qudat al-Hamadani*, translated by A. J. Arberry (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1969), pp. 22–23; henceforth cited as Arberry, *A Sufi Martyr*.

[36] *Shakwā al-Gharīb*, p. 66.

ʿAyn al-Quḍāt was sent to prison in Baghdād, or how long he was kept in detention. Therefore, it is impossible to determine in what year he wrote the defense treatise, or his exact date of birth.[37]

Munzavī considers A.D. 1096 as the correct date of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's birth. This statement cannot be confirmed with certainty on the basis of the limited and contradictory information we have available. However, Munzavī's observation is sound when he considers the later date (A.D. 1098) to be questionable. First, the discrepancy in the information provided in *Majmaʾ al-Ādāb* makes it impossible to take for granted the conventionally accepted A.D. 1098 as ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's date of birth. Moreover, after ʿAyn al-Quḍāt had completed the defense treatise at age thirty–three, some time must have passed before this document was received by his designated addressees—whose identity is not revealed—who in turn must have taken some time to agree on his sentence. Added to this is the physical distance between Hamadhān and Baghdād that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt traveled back to his hometown. Considering these factors, it is difficult to imagine that he was executed in the same year that he composed his defense treatise. Moreover, there is evidence from the period after ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's release from prison in Baghdād, that suggests he had resumed his normal activities and was, for instance, in correspondence with his disciples. In a letter from this period, he talks about his time in prison and his reasons for

[37] In the introduction to the French translation of the *Shakwā al-Gharīb*, Abd el-Jalil indicates ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's date of birth as A.D. 1098 (A.H. 492). See "*La šakwā*", p. 6. His research does not include any reference to the source of this information, although in his research Abd el-Jalil is precise with citing his references. Therefore, he must have compared ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's date of execution with his age at the time of writing the *Shakwā al-Gharīb*. Raḥīm Farmanish, in his analysis of the medieval and the modern sources on ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, notes that only one medieval source, Fawāṭī's *Majmaʿ al-Ādāb*, mentions ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's date of birth, giving it as 1098/492. See, Raḥīm Farmanish, *Sharḥ-i Aḥwāl va Āthār-i ʿAyn al-Quḍāt* (Tehran: Āftāb, 1959), pp. 8–9. ʿUsayrān agrees with Abd el-Jalil and Farmanish on this date. However, ʿAlīnaqī Munzavī, adds a new dimention to the debate on ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's date of birth. Munzavī explains that the author of *Majmaʿ al-Ādāb* had two entries on ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's date of birth (490–92/1096–98), but the earlier date was omitted in the edition that ʿUsayrān and Farmanish had consulted. Their research appeared before the publication of the 1963 edition of *Majmaʾ al-Ādāb*, which included the other date (490/1096) as a correction. See, *Maktūbāt*, 3: 25. But neither ʿUsayrān nor Farmanish addressed this observation after 1963 edition of *Majmaʿ al-Ādāb*. Subsequent studies, with the exception of Munzavī's, have followed suit and taken it for granted that A.D. 1098 was ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's date of birth and that he was executed soon after his imprisonment in Baghdād and the composition of the defense treatise.

writing the *Shakwā al-Gharīb*.[38] In this letter, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt refers to *Zubdat al-Ḥaqāʾiq* as a text that he had composed ten years earlier. According to Munzavī, since we know that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt had written *Zubdat al-Ḥaqāʾiq* at age twenty–four, the reference in this letter is a valid indication that he was thirty–four years old when he wrote the letter.[39] On the basis of this evidence, plus the information in *Majmaʾ al-Ādāb*, Munzavī concludes that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt was indeed born in A.D. 1096 and at the time of his execution was thirty–five years old. These discussions demonstrate that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's date of birth cannot be determined with certainty. Moreover, the details of his life from the time of his release from Baghdād and return to Hamadhān until his execution, one or two years later, are also lost to us.

## *Writings*

We know that during his short life ʿAyn al-Quḍāt composed many books and treatises on mystical subjects.[40] As a young man he wrote eleven books and treatises, none of which had survived.[41] Arberry lists the titles as follows: 1) Entertainment of the Night-Traveller to Recognize the One-Eyed and the Night-Blind, 2) The Jamālī Treatise, 3) The ʿAlāʾiya Treatise, 4) Slice of Syntax, 5) Dictations of Yearning on the Nights of Separation, 6) The Mathematician's Desire, 7) The Pleasures of Lovers and Opportunity of the Passionate, 8) Assault of the Sturdy Nine-Year Old Upon the Infant Milksop, 9) Goal of Research on the Meaning of Mission, 10) Introduction to Arabic Language and the Practice of its Literary Sciences, 11) Interpretation of the Real Truths of the *Qurʾān*.[42]

Ayn al-Quḍāt mentions these works in his surviving texts as well as in his defense treatise.[43] The *Shakwā al-Gharīb* demonstrates ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's detailed knowledge of Islamic mysticism, his exceptional talent as an author, his knowledge of Arab literary culture, and his

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[38] *Maktūbāt*, vol. 2, letter 98, pp. 355–63. See Appendix for the English translation of this letter.

[39] *Maktūbāt*, 3: 26. Cf. Farmanish, *Sharḥ-i Aḥwāl*, pp. 151–52.

[40] *Tamhīdāt*, pp. 1–2. ʿAffīf ʿUsayrān divides ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's works into three categories: works of his youth, writings after the age of twenty four, and works that are attributed to him.

[41] Ibid., pp. 2–3.

[42] Arberry, *A Sufi Martyr*, pp. 70–72.

[43] Abd el-Jalil, *La šakwā*, pp. 24–76.

ability to orchestrate his ideas in an emotive and rhetorical style. The *Shakwā al-Gharīb* restates his defense in three brief articles at the end of the text, which respectively discuss the following topics: of faith in God and His attributes, of faith in the prophethood, and of faith in the next world.[44] ʿAyn al-Quḍāt brings the main argument of his defense to its conclusion by referring the reader to his works.[45] In this manner, he introduces his own writings as evidence against the claims of his adversaries. Arberry's translation of this passage is as follows:

> Any man wishing to check the accuracy of what I have stated, in all that I have remarked both already and hereafter, may seek out my works, examine their contents, and so scrutinize them as to master and fully to exhaust all the ideas expressed in them. The list includes my treatise called *Qirā ʾl-ʿāshī ilā maʿrifat al-ʿūrān waʾl-aʿāshī* ('Entertainment of the night-traveller to recognize the one-eyed and the night-blind'), *al-Risālat al-ʿAlāʾīya* and *al-Muftaladh min al-taṣrīf* ('Slice of syntax'), (the two latter being brief compositions), the treatise entitled *Amālī ʾl-ishtiyāq fī layālī ʾl-firāq* ('Dictations of yearning on the nights of separation'), the book named *Munyat al-ḥaisūb* ('The mathematician's desire') on Indian arithmetic, the treatise I named *Ghāyat al-baḥth ʿan maʿnā ʾl-baʿth* ('Goal of research on the meaning of mission'), another named *Ṣaulat al-bāzil al-anūn ʿalā ʾbn al-labūn* ('Assault of the sturdy nine-year-old upon the infant milksop'), and the book I entitled *Zubdat al-ḥaqāʾiq* ('The cream of realities'). This was the last book I composed being then twenty–four years of age. During this present year, in which destiny has put me to the test, I have reached my thirty–third year, the age of maturity which God the Great and Glorious has mentioned in His words, 'Until, when he is fully mature'; but a man does not attain complete equilibrium until he reaches forty. Amongst the offspring of my thoughts are a thousand erotic verses which I was inspired to compose in ten days; these are collected together in a sheet known as *Nuzhat al-ʿushshāq wa-nahzat al-mushtāq* ('The pleasure of lovers and opportunity of the passionate'). The following lines occur there:
>
> *Ah, and the maiden of Maʿadd descent*
> *On either side, the best of ancestry,*
> *Guarded by warriors powerful as lions*
> *Who raid the foe on noble, short-haired steeds,*
> *Furnished with tempered swords of polished steel*
> *And eke with slender lances, true and long!*
> *She came, whilst my companions slept a-bed,*

[44] *Shakwā al-Gharīb*, pp. 67–86.
[45] Ibid., pp. 65–67.

*Escorted by her modest maids of Saʿd;*
*They trod the heights of hillocks and the vales*
*To visit a generous and mighty man;*
*Clad in the robes of glory and renown,*
*They passed the night in soft, delightful ease,*
*And I right cheerful, Hind being by my side,*
*Kissing her, mantled in sweet perfumery,*
*And culling with my lips the rose of her cheeks.*

I had also embarked on the composition of two extensive books, each of which I intended to comprise ten volumes. The one, on the sciences of belles-lettres, I had entitled *al-Madkhal ilā ʾl-ʿArabīya wa-riyāḍat ʿulūmihā ʾl-adabīya* ('Introduction to the Arabic language and the practice of its literary sciences'); the other was on the interpretation of the real truths of the Koran.[46]

The works listed above are on language, literature, poetry, mathematics, jurisprudence, rhetoric, and mysticism.[47] ʿAyn al-Quḍāt refers to these as works he had completed in his youth, which, based on our reading of the texts, means up to age twenty–four. He names *Zubdat al-Ḥaqāʾiq* as his last completed work of this period. He also makes reference to the *ʿAlāʾī* treatise and the *Treatise on Aesthetics* as projects in progress.

*Zubdat al-Ḥaqāʾiq* was completed in 517/1123. It is a book in one hundred chapters and includes topics on the essence and the attributes of God, prophethood, mysticism, the opening of the inner sight, and the ways of understanding the unseen and the afterlife. In the introduction to *Zubdat al-Ḥaqāʾiq*, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt explains that he began working on the question of prophethood at age twenty–one when he was writing *Ghāyat al-Baḥth ʿan Maʿnī al-Baʿth* (The End of Inquiry on the Meaning of the Mission). He was not satisfied with this treatise nor did it answer the needs of his disciples for a comprehensive discussion of prophethood.[48] Therefore, he tells us he wrote *Zubdat al-Ḥaqāʾiq* to compensate for this shortcoming. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt further explains that his discussions in *Zubdat al-Ḥaqāʾiq* concern a kind of knowledge that is experienced personally and immediately. This

[46] Arberry, *A Sufi Martyr*, pp. 70–72.

[47] He demonstrates his taste for poetry by citing from the one thousand lines of the erotic-mystical verses that he composed in ten days. In the section *Shakwā: Defense against Heresy*, I will discuss how he considers the taste for poetry as a metaphor for the supra-rational quality of understanding the unseen.

[48] ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, *Zubdat al-Ḥaqāʾiq* (Tehran: Tehran University Press, 1961), pp. 3–4.

knowledge is inspirational and cannot be acquired by rational reasoning, although it can be explained by reason, syllogism, and analogy. For example, the realities of the unseen are supra-rational and are disclosed to the prophets while they are in special realms of consciousness. The prophets, in turn, communicate these realities to others who are possessed of reason and can understand them. The faith in prophethood and the relationship between the prophet and the believers are, thus, different from the prophets' unmediated and inspired faith in the unseen.

In addition to the works that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt lists in the *Shakwā al-Gharīb*, there are other writings that he does not mention; he does not make any reference to his personal letters, known as the *Maktūbāt*, nor to the *Tamhīdāt*. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt omitted these titles, either to avoid complicating his defense by introducing other writings to his hostile judges, or because he preferred to limit his arguments in the defense to sources that his adversaries were familiar with and had used to condemn him.[49] In fact, he organized his defense as a response to their evaluation of the ideas that he had expressed in his youth. It seems likely that his treatise on the nature of prophethood, *Ghāyat al-Baḥth ʿan Maʿnā al-Baʿth* (The End of Inquiry on the Meaning of the Mission), was used as a major piece of evidence against him. He explains:

> May God guard him who turns his ear to me, that I may disclose to him some part of the crimes committed against me by the hands of fate. For a group of contemporary theologians—may God succor them perfectly and ease their way to the best of both worlds; may He remove all rancour from their breasts, and furnish them with rectitude in all their affairs—have disapproved of me on account of certain phrases published in a treatise which I composed twenty years ago. My purpose in writing it was to explain certain states claimed by the Sufis, the appearance of which depends upon the manifestation of a stage beyond the stage of reason.[50]

By emphasizing that he was very young when he wrote these texts, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt was able to defend his writings as immature and open to misinterpretation. At the same time, by bringing his age into focus, he was calling attention to the exceptional intelligence and sophistication that provoked envy and anger among his adversaries.

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[49] There are other texts whose titles do not appear in the *Shakwā al-Gharīb* but later scholars have attributed them to ʿAyn al-Quḍāt. I will refer to those later.

[50] *Shakwā al-Gharīb*, pp. 31–2. Cf. Arberry, *A Sufi Martyr*, p. 30.

## *The* Maktūbāt

In his defense treatise, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt refrained from making any reference to either the *Maktūbāt* or the *Tamhīdāt*. There are a number of manuscripts available of both of these texts. ʿAfīf ʿUsayrān lists seven manuscripts at libraries in Iran, Turkey, and at the British Museum that contain ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's letters.[51] ʿUsayrān and Munzavī have edited and printed the *Maktūbāt* in three volumes. The first and the second volumes were first printed in Beirut in 1969 and 1972; the third volume was published in Tehran in 1983.

The *Maktūbāt* is the correspondence between ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and his disciples and associates. These associates include Saljūq high-ranking administrators ʿAzīz al-Dīn (472–527/1080–1133) and Kāmil al-Dawlah, as well as ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's teacher Aḥmad Ghazzālī. These letters are focused on the intellectual discussions they were engaged in, such as the interpretation of the *ḥadīth* and the *Qurʾān* as well as the analysis of the psychological states they experienced on the mystical path. On occasion, there is mention of the political climate under the Saljūqs. The majority of the letters are written as responses to the questions that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's disciples asked him; the same arguments are taken up again in the *Tamhīdāt*. The *Maktūbāt* is a significant resource in learning more about ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's ideas, his relationship with his disciples and associates, and his attitude toward writing as an activity; however, they do not reveal much about the author's family life.[52] ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Jāmī in *Nafaḥāt al-Uns min Ḥaḍarāt al-Quds* describes the degree of intimacy between ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and his teacher, Aḥmad Ghazzālī, by saying that they wrote many letters to each other.[53]

It is clear that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's letters were treated as documents of learning that could be studied during his time and after he was gone: the letters were duplicated, disseminated among designated readers, and filed for future reference. In a letter responding to a recipient who is concerned about not having received a specific letter in the past, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt explains: "I send the writings to my son Aḥmad—may God protect him—I do not know whom he sends them to. If the letter

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[51] *Tamhīdāt*, pp. 10–12.

[52] *Maktūbāt*, 3: 30–33.

[53] ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt al-Uns min Ḥaḍarāt al-Quds*, edited by William Nassau Lees (Calcutta: 1858), sec. 456, p. 475.

has not arrived, they duplicate them there."[54] On the basis of this information, contemporary scholars, like ʿUsayrān and Munzavī, conclude that there must had been a "center" in charge of handling ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's writings. In the letter above, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt refers to the person in charge as "my son Aḥmad." This person's identity and his relationship with the author are unclear. While some have speculated that he is ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's son, others disagree on the ground that his son would had been too young to be put in charge of this responsibility. Some have argued that this person could be Aḥmad the son of Kāmil al-Dawlah, one of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's associates.[55] Aḥmad could be any of his disciples who was competent to carry out this important responsibility. The mere fact that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt refers to this person as "my son" is not proof of any relationship between them except one of affection and respect. In most of his writings, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt addresses the reader using terms of endearment—a common practice in his period. The fact remains that the letters were treated systematically as an essential part of his teaching and scholarship.

## *The* Tamhīdāt

We know that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt completed the *Tamhīdāt* prior to the writing of *Shakwā al-Gharīb*. He indicates the date of the completion of *Tamhīdāt* to be on the ninth of *Rajab*, which coincided with the *ādīnih* (Friday) celebration. ʿAfīf ʿUsayrān explains that 521/1127 is the only year ʿAyn al-Quḍāt could be referring to because that is the only year between the completion of *Zubdat al-Ḥaqāʾiq* (517/1123) and the writing of *Shakwā al-Gharīb* (525/1130) when *ādīnih* falls on the ninth of *Rajab*. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt abruptly ends the *Tamhīdāt* on that evening when he is visited by Shaykh Abū ʿAlī ʿĀmilī, who relates to him a dream he had concerning ʿAyn al-Quḍāt.[56] In this dream, the two of them are on their way to see the Prophet Muḥammad and ʿAyn al-Quḍāt is carrying the *Tamhīdāt*. The Prophet examines the book and asks ʿAyn al-Quḍāt to leave it with him and not to disclose any more secrets. After hearing Shaykh Abū ʿAlī's dream, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt decides to bring the *Tamhīdāt* to an end immediately, that is on the

[54] *Maktūbāt*, vol. 1, letter 46, sec. 605, p. 363.

[55] *Maktūbāt*, 3: 109. Kāmil al-Dawlah is a court noble whose name appears in some of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's letters. Farmanish, *Sharḥ-i Aḥwāl*, pp. 27–31.

[56] *Tamhīdāt*, pp. 353–54.

ninth of *Rajab*, 521/1130. Mystical secrets, as the term implies, are supposed to be kept secret. In ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's writing, the necessity of withholding information from the reader is a subject that he often talks about. Three years later he wrote his defense treatise while under arrest. However, in the *Shakwā al-Gharīb* he makes no reference to the *Tamhīdāt*. Had he listed the *Tamhīdāt* in the defense, he would undoubtedly have lost any chance of release from prison.

The *Tamhīdāt* is considered ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's most significant work because it is the most comprehensive. It consists of ten chapters on topics of mysticism and describes the wayfarer's visionary experiences and states of mind at different stages of the person's development. The *Tamhīdāt*'s ten chapters are:

Introducing the First Principle: The Difference between Acquired Knowledge and Knowledge by Proximity
Introducing the Second Principle: The Conditions for the Wayfarer on the Path of God
Introducing the Third Principle: Humans Are Created in Three Types
Introducing the Fourth Principle: Know Yourself in Order to Know God
Introducing the Fifth Principle: Describing the Five Pillars of Islam
Introducing the Sixth Principle: Reality and the States of Love
Introducing the Seventh Principle: The Reality of the Heart and the Soul
Introducing the Eighth Principle: Mysteries of the *Qurʾān* and the Secret of the Creation of Man
Introducing the Ninth Principle: An Explanation of the Reality of Faith and Faithlessness
Introducing the Tenth Principle: The Essence and the Reality of the Earth and the Sky Is the Light of Muḥammad and the Light of Satan

The first chapter, "The Difference between Acquired Knowledge and Knowledge by Proximity," declares the overall focus of the *Tamhīdāt*, while the following chapters demonstrate how the author has organized the subject of knowledge into different categories. The kind of knowledge that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt is concerned with, "knowledge by proximity," manifests itself in its relationship with different levels of reality the presence of which may or may not be acknowledged and perceived by the individual. These realities, as I shall explain in the

following chapters, are not necessarily visible to us, but become discernible as the individual is ready to perceive them. The discussions in the *Tamhīdāt* proceed with a systematic analysis of human nature and its typology.[57] ʿAyn al-Quḍāt explains that just as there are different kinds of realities that are perceived at different levels of awareness, there are different kinds of human beings with different aptitudes for perceiving these realities. In this manner, the discussions in the *Tamhīdāt* advance with a focus on both man and the cosmos. The final chapter is on the qualities and expressions of the light of Muḥammad and the light of Satan. In this discussion, the familiar questions of good and evil, and the right and wrong of the *sharīʿa* (Islamic law) are disputed. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt argues for a perception of these lights as manifestations of God's attributes and as expressions of different degrees of awareness. Awareness on a cosmological scale implies insight into the hidden intents of God. On a human level, the awareness of these lights involves the individual's recognition of the self and his own position on the mystical path apropos the presence of God. The wayfarer finds access to the realities of the unseen through a death experience that the author calls mystical death. In the *Tamhīdāt*, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt presents these subjects by elaborating on the insights he has gained in regard to the realities of the unseen (*ghayb*). These observations define his perception of faith and the *Qurʾān*, the nature of prophethood, God's attributes of love and separation, the stages of love, and the reality of death.

The most important medieval commentary on a work by ʿAyn al-Quḍāt is by Khawājah Banda Nawāz Gīsūdarāz, who analyzed the major themes in the *Tamhīdāt*. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt was an important scholar for the early Chishtī religious leaders and was discussed and written about by the Chishtī scholars who preceded Gīsūdarāz as well as his contemporaries. But these works were not as focused and as comprehensive as his. In the commentary, Gīsūdarāz provided an outline of the discussions in the *Tamhīdāt* and elaborated ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's approach to mystical unveilings. The final chapters of the present study will examine in more detail Gīsūdarāz and his contribution to the scholarship of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and the subject of *samāʿ*.

[57] Ibid., pp. 39–56.

### *Works Attributed to ʿAyn al-Quḍāt*

Scholars are in agreement that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt is the author of the *Tamhīdāt*, *Maktūbāt*, *Shakwā al-Gharīb ʿan al-Awṭān ilā ʿUlamāʾ al-Buldān* and *Zubdat al-Ḥaqāʾiq*, but there is disagreement as to whether the other texts attributed to ʿAyn al-Quḍāt are definitively his. In the following, I refer to these disputed texts. *Sharḥ-i Kalimāt-i Bābā Ṭāhir-i ʿUryān* (A Description of the Sayings of Bābā Ṭāhir ʿUryān) is a lexicon of mystical terminology. ʿUsayrān argues that its plain diction and brief explanations are uncharacteristic of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's sophisticated writing style. Had he composed this work in his youth, ʿUsayrān explains, he would have mentioned it in the *Shakwā al-Gharīb* along with his other writings from that period.[58] Javād Maqṣūd, the editor of *Sharḥ-i Kalimāt-i Bābā Ṭāhir-i ʿUryān*, and ʿAlīnaqī Munzavī support this perspective.[59] As Maqṣūd explains, at one point in the text the author says that he is not from Hamadhān but had merely passed through it once.[60] Another disputed work is *Yazdān ShināKht* (The Treatise on Understanding God), which concerns itself with subjects in Islamic theological philosophy. It was initially attributed to Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī (d. A.D. 1191) and was first published in Iran in 1937 under his name.[61]

The *Lawāyiḥ* (The Decrees), a treatise on love, is erroneously attributed to ʿAyn al-Quḍāt. Raḥīm Farmanish, the editor of the manuscript, describes the text as ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's homage to his mentor Aḥmad Ghazzālī.[62] Aḥmad Munzavī disputes this attribution and identifies Warkānī as the author.[63] Farmanish, bases his argument on the thematic and stylistic qualities of the manuscript and its arrangement in a compilation, which consists of selections from the *Sawāniḥ*, parts of the *Tamhīdāt*, and a treatise on Greek wisdom.[64] According to Farmanish, the inclusion of these independent manuscripts in one collection demonstrates that the compiler selected

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[58] Ibid., pp. 35–36.

[59] *Maktūbāt*, 3: 35–36.

[60] ʿAyn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadhānī, "*Sharḥ-i Kalimāt-i Bābā Ṭāhir-i ʿUryān*," in Javād Maqṣūd, *Sharḥ-i Aḥwāl wa Athār wa Dūbaytīhā-yi Bābā Ṭāhir-i ʿUryān* (Tehran: Anjuman-i Āthār-i Millī, 1975), p. 258.

[61] *Tamhīdāt*, p. 37.

[62] ʿAyn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadhānī, *Lawāyiḥ*, 2d ed., edited by Raḥīm Farmanish (Tehran: Manūchihrī, 1958), introduction, pp. j, d.

[63] *Maktūbāt*, 3: 36.

[64] ʿAyn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadhānī, *Lawāyiḥ*, pp. d, h.

them based on a connection he drew between the authors. He further explains that the *Lawāyiḥ* must have been written after the death of Aḥmad Ghazzālī (A.D. 1126) because the author remembers him as a deceased shaykh.[65] This would mean that if ʿAyn al-Quḍāt were the author he would have completed the treatise sometime in the last five years of his life. I contend that there is sufficient evidence to argue against the attribution of the manuscript to ʿAyn al-Quḍāt. Essentially, the *Lawāyiḥ* lacks the intensity that is experienced in the writing of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, especially in the latter years of his life. The highly Arabized style of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt is recognizable through his constant interjection of verses from the *Qurʾān*, the *ḥadith*, and high Arab literature, in his Persian sentences. This type of writing produces a hybrid style that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt compensates for by providing the Persian rendition of the Arabic immediately following the original. In contrast, the *Lawāyiḥ* refers to Arabic phrases far less frequently and rather cites Arabic poetry in between the prose sections; uses words that do not belong in ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's vocabulary; and leaves out words and terms of address that are characteristic of his diction. It is sound to say that the author of the *Lawāyiḥ* was highly influenced by Ghazzālī and ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and wrote the *Lawāyiḥ* in a style of his own as a response to both authors. In the mid 1970s Bruce Lawrence provided a study of the *Lawāyiḥ*, which he introduced as a treatise by the famous Chishtī leader, Qāḍī Ḥamīd al-Dīn Nāgawrī (d. A.D. 1244).[66] Lawrence was obviously unaware of the edited manuscript that Farmanish published in 1958. He was, however, referring to the same treatise for I compared the quotations that appear in his study with the *Lawāyiḥ* and determined that he was writing about the same treatise and not another source under this title. Lawrence believed that the manuscript had survived in fragments that appeared in some medieval sources.[67] He based his study on medieval bibliographical sources and also Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn Baranī's (d. A.D. 1357) *Tārīkh Fīrūzshāhī*, which identified Nāgawrī as the author and described the *Lawāyiḥ* as a popular mystical treatise that the early Chishtī leaders used in training their disciples. This seems to be a plausible conclusion considering the early Chishtī scholars studied the works of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and his teacher Aḥmad Ghazzālī and aspired to them in formulating their mystical discussions

[65] Ibid., p. d.

[66] Bruce B. Lawrence, "The Lawaʾih of Qazi Hamid Ud-Din Naguri," in *Indo-Iranica the Quarterly Organ of the Iran Society*, 28. 1 (1975): 34.

[67] Ibid., pp. 38–39.

especially on the pivotal subject of love and *samāʿ*, listening to music as a spiritual practice. In addition, *Lawāyiḥ* makes intimate references to India and the devotional practices of the idol worshippers of the region, which can be interpreted as how the author experienced his environment.[68]

In 1960, Raḥīm Farmanish edited and published *Ghāyat al-Imkān fī Dirāyat al-Makān* (The Extent of Possibility in Understanding Space), also known as *Risālat al-Amkina wa al-Azmina* (The Treatise on Times and Spaces). In the introduction to the text, Farmanish explains that he came across the manuscript by chance a few years earlier. *Ghāyat al-Imkān fī Dirāyat al-Makān* is not mentioned anywhere in the writings of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt. The editor of the manuscript, Raḥīm Farmanish, justifies this omission by arguing that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt had composed this work shortly before his death and could not have mentioned it in his earlier writings.[69] Whereas ʿUsayrān dismisses this work from the list of the writings by ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, ʿAlīnaqī Munzavī considers it misleading to attribute the work to ʿAyn al-Quḍāt. Following *Kashf al-Ẓunūn*, Munzavī attributes this treatise to Tāj al-Dīn Maḥmūd ibn Khudādād Hamdhānī Ishnawī, who was from Herat and died about thirty years after ʿAyn al-Quḍāt. Munzavī provides an annotated bibliography on the contemporary research on *Ghāyat al-Imkān fī Dirāyat al-Makān* and its disputed authorship.[70] Indeed, it is unlikely that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt composed this treatise. Whereas in ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's other writings one always hears echoes of recurring topics, this treatise concerns a theme—the perception of time and space apropos God's unity and omnipresence—that is not a dominant focus in his writings. Moreover, this text is written primarily in simple Persian prose, while ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's writing style is filled with nuance and is mainly in Arabic.

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[68] ʿAyn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadhānī, *Lawāyiḥ*, pp. 25, 28.

[69] Ibid., introduction, pp. b–j.

[70] *Maktūbāt*, 3: 36. Cf. *Fihrist Nuskhihā-ye Khaṭṭī Markaz Dāʾirat al-Maʿārif Buzurg Islāmī*, vol. 1, edited by Aḥmad Munzavī (Tehran: Intishārāt Markaz Taḥqīqāt Fārsī Irān wa Pākistān, 1999), pp. 181–182.

## *ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's Death*

The sources that tell us about ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's death are limited and leave out important information about his execution. We know he was executed on May 23, 1131 (23 *Jumādā* II, A.H. 525) in Hamadhān, at some point after his release from the Baghdād prison. He was put to death in a violent manner and his body was destroyed. The classical hagiographies do not mention any burial or grave for him but the contemporary accounts identify a small ditch in the old cemetery of the city as the place where his remains were left. Considered to be a blessed place, this site remains a memorial to ʿAyn al-Quḍāt in the folk culture of Hamadhān. In recent years, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt has received national recognition through the establishment of a sanctuary and memorial center in the old cemetery of Hamadhān.[71] According to the author of *Tadhkarih-yi Riyāḍ al-ʿĀrifīn*, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt was killed in a most horrific manner and his execution was turned into an spectacle for everyone to remember.[72] ʿUsayrān, citing Hidāyat,[73] refers to this ghastly event as follows:[74]

> The envious were not satisfied with sending our philosopher far away from his homeland, Hamadhān, and putting him in the Baghdād prison, but took him back to Hamadhān and skinned him [alive] and crucified him in the courtyard of the school were he used to teach. Then, they took him down on the ground and wrapped him in a straw-mat, poured oil on him, and set him on fire.

The author of *Tadhkarih-yi Riyāḍ al-ʿĀrifīn*, explains that the execution took place before the Sultan. He is referring to Maḥmūd ibn

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[71] The construction of the memorial building started in 2003 and was expected to be completed in the fall of 2009. The building includes a sanctuary, library and manuscript center, museum, and exhibition hall. The structure is built on a 20,500 cm. plot of land. The sanctuary is 4,000 cm., the library 400 cm., and the museum 450 cm.

[72] Rīḍā Qulī Khān Hidāyat, *Tadhkarih-yi Riyāḍ al-ʿĀrifīn*, eds. Mullāh ʿAbd al-Ḥussayn and Maḥmūd Khawnsārī (Tehran: Intishārāt Kitābfurūshī Wiṣāl), pp. 108–9; henceforth cited as Hidāyat, *Riyāḍ al-ʿĀrifīn*.

[73] Ibid., pp. 3, 9. Hidāyat (A.H. 1215–88/A.D. 1801–1871), a poet laureate and literary scholar of the Qājār, is the author of *Tadhkarih-yi Muḥaqqiqīn* that is known as *Tadhkarih-yi Riyāḍ al-ʿĀrifīn*. In the introduction to the text, he explains that this work was started during the rule of Muḥammad Shāh and was completed when Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh was in power.

[74] ʿAyn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadhānī, "*Zubdat al-Ḥaqāʾiq*," in *Muṣannafāt-i ʿAyn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadānī*, edited by ʿAfīf ʿUsayrān (Tehran: Tehran University Press, 1962), p. 1.

Muḥammad ibn Malikshāh (r. A.D. 1118–31),[75] who at the time was twenty–five years old.[76]

Why was he subjected to such a violent death? Who were those responsible for his execution and what motivated them to commit this atrocity? The surviving documents fail to give us definitive answers. In his defense treatise, *Shakwā al-Gharīb*, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt talks about the charge of heresy against him. However, the account is self-censored and avoids referring to some of his writings. This is an indication that he is keeping silent about other aspects of his life and its entanglements. The other source is ʿImād al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥāmid al-Iṣfahānī al-Kātib (519–97/1125–1201), the acclaimed Saljūq historian of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's era. ʿImād al-Dīn is famous not only as a historian but as a superb author who recorded historical events in the refined *sajʿ* (poetic prose) style. His writing enjoys the dramatic quality that is experienced in the Persian chronicles of Abū al-Faḍl Muḥammad ibn Ḥusayn al-Bayhaqī (A.D. 995–1077). This acclaimed historian of the Ghaznawī dynasty was a model that his successors aspired to. ʿImād al-Dīn's depiction of the execution of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt resonates with one of the memorable incidents in Bayhaqī when he describes the execution of the loyal vizir of Maḥmūd, Ḥasanak, who was deposed by the new ruler Masʿūd on the charge of being a shīʿi. ʿImād al-Dīn had firsthand knowledge of court intrigues and the end of many noble men who fell prey to them, but he was best known as the historian of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's Levant conquests and the author of *Barq al-Shāmī*. His famous text, *Kharīdat al-Qaṣr wa Jarīdat al-ʿAṣr fī Dhikr Fuḍalāʾ Ahl Fārs*, contains the earliest account of the execution of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt. In 623/1226, al-Fatḥ ibn ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad al-Bandārī al-Iṣfahānī (586–643/1190–1246) provides an abridged version of ʿImād al-Dīn's other book, *Nuṣrat al-Fatra wa ʿUṣrat al-Fiṭra fī Akhbār al-Wūzaraʾ al-Saljūqīya*.[77] His rendition is called *Tārīkh Dawlat Āl Saljūq*. This text also provides valuable information on the personalities and the circumstances that involved ʿAyn al-Quḍāt. Both medieval and modern scholars who have written on ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's death have relied on ʿImād al-Dīn's history. However, they have not been able to

[75] Maḥmūd became the king in A.H. 511 and died of an illness on the way from Baghdād to Iran in A.H. 525 He was twenty eight years old.

[76] Hidāyat, *Riyāḍ al-ʿĀrifīn*, 108–9. Cf., *Shakwā al-Gharīb*, p.18.

[77] This text is ʿImād al-Dīn's Arabic rendition of *Nafthat al-Maṣdūr*. Nūshīrawān ibn Khālid al-Kāshānī (d. 532/1138), the vizir to the Saljūq rulers Maḥmūd and Masʿūd, wrote this now lost text in Persian.

arrive at a convincing explanation for his execution. A careful analysis of ʿImād al-Dīn's history and ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's defense, the *Shakwā al-Gharīb,* will shed light on some of the questions that surround his death.

The accounts by ʿImād al-Dīn and ʿAyn al-Quḍāt have defined the focus for the subsequent discussions on his execution. These sources have considered his death either in a political framework, in his association with the members of the court nobility who were no longer in the position of power, or in the context of his mystical views that were branded as heretical. In the *Shakwā al-Gharīb*, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt explains that his adversaries, who are envious of him, had distorted his words in order to convict him. He explained his views and presented his case in the context of the scholarship he had produced. ʿImād al-Dīn's historiography, on the other hand, points to the court intrigues and liaisons that lead to the arrest and execution of many individuals, including ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and the author's own relatives.

At the time of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's death, ʿImād al-Dīn, the acclaimed historian of the Saljūq era, was six years old. Members of his immediate family had firsthand knowledge of the execution because several of them were intimate friends and followers of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and considered him a just successor to Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad Ghazzālī (A.D. 1058–1111), the great theologian-scholar of eleventh-century Saljūq Iran, the author of *Mishkāt al-Anwār* (The Niche of Lights), and the elder brother of Aḥmad Ghazzālī (ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's mentor).[78] ʿImād al-Dīn's uncles were part of the intimate circle of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's followers. They are mentioned at several places in ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's letters,[79] and in the *Tamhīdāt* he refers to his correspondence with them.[80] ʿImād al-Dīn's family, the Ālūh, were high-ranking nobles in the court and the administration of Sultan Maḥmūd.[81] ʿAyn al-Quḍāt was associated with the court through them as well as other powerful friends. ʿImād al-Dīn's account, cited below, states that his uncle ʿAzīz al-Dīn's downfall from power was linked to ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's arrest and execution. It is noteworthy that ʿImād al-Dīn begins his narrative on

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[78] ʿImād al-Dīn, *Tārīkh Dawlat Āl Saljūq*, p. 141.

[79] *Maktūbāt*, 3: 92–93. Munzavī lists ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's letters that are either addressed to ʿImad al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī's family members or include some mention of them.

[80] *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 23, p. 15.

[81] ʿImad al-Dīn, *Kharīdat al-Qaṣr*, 1: 18. Ālūh in Persian means eagle. They were a learned family from Iṣfahān.

ʿAyn al-Quḍāt by first discussing his friendship with his uncle. In fact the author refers to his own uncle as a martyr even before he turns to ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and the subject of his execution. In this manner, ʿImād al-Dīn declares his personal investment in the ensuing narrative. His uncle ʿAzīz al-Dīn had been a vizir who declined to continue in that office and became a court advisor to Maḥmūd. He was ousted in 525/1131 and was executed two years later.[82] The year of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's execution, 525/1131, witnessed the purging and the execution of a few important statesmen, including ʿAzīz al-Dīn.[83] These events affected ʿImād al-Dīn's entire family, who were banished from their hometown, Iṣfahān, and forced into exile.[84] In his introduction to *Kharīdat al-Qaṣr wa Jarīdat al-ʿAṣr fī Dhikr Fuḍalāʾ Ahl Fārs*, the editor provides a synoptic background on ʿImād al-Dīn's family history and explains:[85]

> The death of his uncle in Tikrīt was the consequence of political struggles and the confusions that appeared at that time. These difficult circumstances had consequences for the whole family and the youth [ʿImād al-Dīn] witnessed all of these events while he was still young and green.

According to ʿImād al-Dīn, Sultan Maḥmūd's vizir Qavām al-Dīn Nāṣir ibn ʿAlī Abī al-Qāsim al-Dargazīnī (d. 527/1133) was responsible

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[82] Ibn Athīr, *Al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1965-67), pp. 669–70. Ibn Athīr does not mention ʿAyn al-Quḍāt but refers to ʿAzīz al-Dīn's imprisonment and execution in Tikrīt. This information appears in the same place as the author reports the end of Maḥmūd and the rule of his son Malak Dawūd. He records that Maḥmūd's vizir Abū al-Qāsim al-Anasābādhī was wary about certain noble members of the government including, Abū Naṣr Aḥmad ibn Ḥāmid al-Mustawfī, Anūshtakīn (known as Shīrgīr), his son ʿUmar, and ʿAzīz al-Dīn. The latter was arrested and sent to the Mujāhid al-Dīn Bihrūz in Tikrīt. There he was executed. Anūshtakīn and his son, who was a prime minister to Maḥmūd, were executed in *Jamādī al-Ākhar*. In the *Shawwāl* of the same year, A.H. 525, Maḥmūd fell ill and died in Hamadhān. At the time of his death, he was about twenty seven years old and had reigned for twelve years, nine months and twenty days. His son's ascendancy to the throne was met with resistance in Hamdhān and the Jibāl. After the unrest subsided, the vizir, Abū al-Qāsim al-Unsābādhī, moved to Rayy to the court of Sultan Sanjar.

Ibn Athīr identifies the vizir Dargazīnī as Anasābādī. Anasābād was a village in the province of Dargazīn between Hamadhān and Zanjān. For information on Dargazīn and its elite, see C. Edmund Bosworth, "Dargazīnī," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, in www.iranica.com, accessed March 20, 2007.

[83] *Maktūbāt*, 3: 95.

[84] ʿImad al-Dīn, *Kharīdat al-Qaṣr*, 1: 43; see n. 1 where it is explained that Tikrīt was built by the Persians in the northwestern corner of Iraq. Many famous people were detained there.

[85] Ibid., 1: 18.

for the arrest and execution of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt.[86] ʿImād al-Dīn casts al-Dargazīnī as the court Iago. He is shrewd, hostile and envious of sophisticated men like ʿAyn al-Quḍāt. Another source from this period, *Tārīkh Dawlat Āl Saljūq*, cites a former court vizir, Nūshīrawān Khālid, who explains that he resigned his post as Maḥmūd's vizir in Baghdād after one year and one month, because he could not cope with the corruption and the rivalry that permeated the court.[87] Dargazīnī played a significant role in instigating corruption and court intrigues. Nūshīrawān further explains that after his resignation, al-Dargazīnī resumed his post and became the legitimate vizir, for that setting.[88] Al-Dargazīnī came from a humble background but managed to become the vizir to sultans Sanjar, Maḥmūd, and Ṭughrul.[89] The motives for al-Dargazīnī's antagonism toward ʿAyn al-Quḍāt are not clear. Nor is it certain who were the judges in charge of his case, whom ʿAyn al-Quḍāt calls "the learned men of knowledge" in the *Shakwā al-Gharīb*, whom he addresses in his defense treatise, and whom he beseeches in his plea for freedom.[90] Instead of shedding light on his

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[86] Louis Massignon, *La Passion de Husayn Ibn Mansûr Hallâj*, vol. 2 (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), p. 176. Massignon briefly discusses ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's execution as follows:

> ʿAyn al-Qudât mourut à trente-trois ans, pendu, à Hamadhân: le 23 jum. II 525 (= 23 mai 1131): par ordre du sultan Mahmûd, en même temps que plusieurs hauts fonctionnaires avec lesquels il était lié, notamement l'atabek Shîrgîr, d'Abhar.

The footnote to this passage reads as follows:

> ʿImâd Isfahânî, *nusra*, ms. p. 2145, f. 165–176. Il était protégé par le trésorier ʿAzîz-b-Rajâ, haî du vizir Qiwâm Darguzînî (que le sultan suprême, Sanjar, ami d'Ahmad Ghazâlî, fera exécuter à Sapurkhwast en 527).

[87] Another source on al-Dargazīnī is Nūshīrawān ibn Khālid (d. A.H. 532), the deputy to the Caliph Mustarshid and also the vizir to the Saljūq rulers Maḥmūd and Masʿud. Nūshīrawān is the author of *Nafthat al-Maṣdūr*, translated into Arabic by ʿImād al-Dīn and called *Nuṣrat al-Fatra wa ʿUṣrat al-Fiṭra fī Akhbār al-Wūzaraʾ al-Saljuqīya*. As mentioned earlier, al-Bandārī (A.H. 586–643) provided an abridged version of ʿImād al-Dīn's edition titled *Tārīkh Dawlat Āl Saljūq*.

[88] ʿImād al-Dīn, *Tārīkh Dawlat Āl Saljūq*, p. 140.

[89] Ibid., pp. 135–39.

[90] ʿAyn al-Quḍāt describes his loneliness and alienation (*ghurba)* by reciting from his own poetry and by invoking the poetry of famous Arab poets whose reflections on separation and captivity give him solace. See, Arberry, *A Sufi Martyr*, p. 21.

> This is a flash issued to the outstanding scholars and renowned servants—may God perpetuate their shadows outstretched over the dwellers in the farthest horizons, and may all the regions of the earth never cease to be most brilliantly illuminated by their lights—by one in exile from his motherland, and afflicted by the trials and

death, the limited information available has given rise to conjecture and speculation.

ʿImād al-Dīn's personal background could have tainted his view of the events at the Saljūq court. ʿImād al-Dīn was a historian whose interest in the Saljūqs involved his own family who was ostracized from the court shortly after ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's execution. This was the context in which the author referred to ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and praised him for his superior knowledge and intelligence. At the same time, ʿImād al-Dīn's discussion on ʿAyn al-Quḍāt touched on subjects that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt brought up in his defense treatise, the *Shakwā al-Gharīb*. Both authors referred to the adversaries' envy toward ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and their intentional misinterpretation and distortion of his ideas. It was not clear whether ʿImād al-Dīn was recording what is considered common knowledge among those familiar with this case, or whether he was repeating what ʿAyn al-Quḍāt explained in the *Shakwā al-Gharīb*.

Unlike the *Shakwā al-Gharīb*, ʿImād al-Dīn's discussion pointed toward court intrigues, oustings, manipulations and assassinations. His account focused on the princess, the vizirs, and other influential personalities who characterized that epoch. This discussion involved his own uncle, Abū Naṣr Aḥmad ibn Ḥāmid Nafīs ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdallāh ibn ʿAlī ibn Maḥmūd ibn Hibat Allāh ibn Ālūh, known as ʿAzīz al-Dīn (472–527/1080–1133), and his enemy, Sultan Maḥmūd's vizir, Qavām al-Dīn Nāṣir ibn ʿAlī Abī al-Qāsim al-Dargazīnī. According to ʿImād al-Dīn, al-Dargazīnī was the one responsible for sending both ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and ʿAzīz al-Dīn to the gallows. Consider ʿImād al-Dīn's discussion on ʿAyn al-Quḍāt:[91]

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tribulations of time. His eyelids are ever beset by sleeplessness, and trepidation is the constant companion of his pillow, with prolonged weeping, and sighs and lamentations; anxiety grips the whole of his heart; his soul entire is inflamed with grief, whose repeated onsets his heart's core can no longer endure. His heart, consumed by the fire of separation, burns with yearning for his friends and brothers; the burning pangs of love blaze in his bowels, and the marks thereof appear ever more clearly with the passing days. His only companions are the stars, to which he whispers with flooding tears:

What, prison bars and iron chains,
And yearning's flames, and exile pains,
And sundering far from those I love?
What mighty anguish these must prove!

[91] ʿImad al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī, *Kharīdat al-Qaṣr*, 3: 137–38.

> Abū'l-Maʿālī ʿAbdallāh ibn Abī Bakr Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī originally from Miyānjī, residing in Hamadhān, was the successful, close companion of my martyred uncle ʿAzīz al-Dīn, may God bless his soul. When misfortune overtook my uncle and he went into hiding, the vizir al-Dargazīnī took charge of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt. He helped fate achieve its aims, and envy got the best of him. Indeed he [ʿAyn al-Quḍāt] was among the most noble of the scholars and one who was referred to as an example of excellence and commitment [to scholarship]. After al-Ghazzālī no one ever shone like him in his excellence. He produced writings in the Arabic language in a style all his own: writings that gave meaning to the Truth. In his interpretations he followed the way of the people of the path [mystics], and he acquired the ability to explain it [meaning of the Truth] in the language of mysticism. He spread the scent of his perfume in knowledge, and the hearts absorbed the stream of his excellence. His fame spread in both the difficult and the easy times, and going to him was like a pilgrimage, and visiting him was an opportunity that was taken as an auspicious blessing.
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> He was among the most noble friends of God, indeed he reached the highest state of spiritual perfection and his miracles flared like the illumination of the comets. The pseudo-scholars envied him and misinterpreted subjects mentioned in his writings that he had not expanded on. They took them out of context and interpreted them at face value; they did not ask him for their meaning. The barbarian vizir arrested ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and rushed to prosecute him. He was harsh in his judgement and carried ʿAyn al-Quḍāt in chains to Baghdād in order to find a way to make the shedding of his blood permissible and to punish him for his crime. And when the truth prevailed [he could not prove that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt was guilty], treachery overtook al-Dargazīnī's pride. Then he returned him to Hamadhān; and he and his supporters treated him like the Jews in the case of Jesus when they dressed him in the clothes of Moses, but God saved His prophet from the unbelievers. "And they did not kill him or crucify him but it appeared that way."[92] And He put His friend [friend of God] to trial by means of wicked men. This vizir who perpetuated crimes against the vizir [of God] crucified him. Before his execution, he [ʿAyn al-Quḍāt] paused, reminded them of God, and recited the words of God to them. This was the evening of the 17th of the *Jumādā al-Ākhir* in the year 525. Then he walked toward the gallows, he embraced them and read [this verse]: "And soon will the unjust assailants know what vicissitudes their affairs will take!"[93]

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[92] *The Meaning of the Holy Qurʾān*, translated by ʿAbdullah Yūsuf ʿAlī (Maryland: Amana Corporation, 1989), 4: 157. English translations of the Qurʾānic verses are from this source unless indicated otherwise; henceforth cited as *Qurʾān*.

[93] Ibid., 26: 227.

ʿImād al-Dīn explains that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt was executed after the author's uncle lost his status in the court. He does not explain whether ʿAyn al-Quḍāt was sent to the gallows because he no longer had a powerful protector who would defend him against the charge of heresy that was brought against him by his own adversaries, or because the enemies of ʿAzīz al-Dīn were trying to give his uncle a warning by killing his friend in a violent manner. The works that evaluate this period do not provide a definitive answer to this question.

ʿAzīz al-Dīn was arrested in the same year (525/1131) soon after ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's execution. He was sent to the gallows two years later. The reason why Sultan Maḥmūd turned against his once favorite advisor, ʿAzīz al-Dīn, is as perplexing as ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's execution. ʿImād al-Dīn sees Maḥmūd's vizir, al-Dargazīnī, as the instigator of these executions.[94] Al-Dargazīnī is an enemy of ʿAzīz al-Dīn, and by implication, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, and the cause of their executions. ʿImād al-Dīn explains that Maḥmūd became suspicious of ʿAzīz al-Dīn when he had a financial dispute with Sultan Sanjar (d. 552/1131), his own uncle and father-in-law.[95] Maḥmūd's dispute with Sanjar was over the dowry of Sanjar's daughters, Mahmalak Khātūn and Sitī Khātūn, who were both married to Maḥmūd but who had already passed away. Al-Rāwandī describes the dowry of Mahmalak Khātūn as a treasure that was carried on the back of elephants from Khurāsān to Maḥmūd in Iraq.[96] After the death of Mahmalak Khātūn, Sanjar wedded his other daughter, Sitī Khātūn, to his young nephew. When she also passed away, Sanjar requested the return of their gold and jewelry. Maḥmūd did not want to return the jewelry. Al-Dargazīnī, who was looking for an opportunity to remove ʿAzīz al-Dīn from the court, told Maḥmūd it was best to imprison ʿAzīz al-Dīn, who knew about the jewelry and would tell Sanjar's delegate about it. Maḥmūd agreed and ʿAzīz al-Dīn was sent to prison in Tikrīt. Sanjar's delegate arrived and, contrary to their expectations, did not ask for ʿAzīz al-Dīn's testimony on this matter. In the meantime, ʿAzīz al-Dīn remained in prison in Tikrīt. Maḥmūd wrote to him and promised that he was going to

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[94] ʿImād al-Dīn's narrative is the oldest historical account on the circumstances of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's execution, however, his views could be prejudiced by his personal vendettas against al-Dargazīnī.

[95] ʿImād al-Dīn, *Tārīkh Dawlat Āl Saljūq*, pp. 142–43.

[96] Al-Rāwandī, Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ibn Sulaymān, *Rāḥat al-Ṣudūr wa Āyat al-Surūr dar Tārīkh Āl Saljūq*, edited by Muḥammad Iqbāl (Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1985), p. 305.

release him from prison, but Maḥmūd became ill and died (525/1131), before he could fulfill his promise. Eventually, al-Dargazīnī, who had obtained a few signed blank decrees from Sanjar, carried out the execution of ʿAzīz al-Dīn at Tikrīt in 527/1133. The new ruler, Ṭughrul, who was not interested in the powerful agents of the former ruler, and was already suspicious of al-Dargazīnī's diplomatic relationship with the shīʿis, issued the death sentence for al-Dargazīnī. He was executed only forty days after ʿAzīz al-Dīn.[97] Considering the rivalry among the Saljūq princes and the shifting fronts they established in seeking power, it is normal that they were suspicious of everyone around them.[98] For instance, ʿImād al-Dīn's villain, al-Dargazīnī, was one of their loyal servants who was engaged with the shīʿis in order to secure his Saljūq patrons a superior position apropos the Caliph. But the new ruler Ṭughrul sent him to the gallows under suspicion of collaborating with the dissident shīʿis.

In the final analysis, ʿImād al-Dīn's history fails to provide a convincing explanation for ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's execution and his relationship with the purges that took place between 525/1131 and 527/1133. In recent years, ʿAlīnaqī Munzavī has offered a new perspective on this period and the place of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt in it.[99] Munzavī interprets ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's sporadic anti-Turkish statements that appear in his writings as the indication that he belonged to an anti-Saljūq political circle, which included his friends and associates. These associates include Saljūq high-ranking administrators ʿAzīz al-Dīn and Kāmil al-Dawlah.[100] He argues that they supported gnostic views that were at odds with the Saljūqs' orthodox sunnī beliefs.

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[97] ʿImad al-Dīn, *Kharīdat al-Qaṣr*, 1: 44.

[98] A number of sources have discussed extensively the political milieu of Saljūq rule, its significant individuals, their relationship with each other and with the Caliph. The political complexities of the Saljūq rule involve two main factors (1) the dispute among Sanjar and his nephews over sovereignty and (2) their desire to break away from the authority of the Caliph in Baghdād. These factors determine their overall political attitude. See, ʿImad al-Dīn, *Tārīkh Dawlat Āl Saljūq*, and *Kharīdat al-Qaṣr*, vols. 1–4. Al-Rāwandī, Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ibn Sulaymān, *Rāḥat al-Ṣudūr wa Āyat al-Surūr dar Tārīkh Āl Saljūq*. *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vols. 5–6, edited by R.N. Frye and J.A. Boyle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968).

[99] *Maktūbāt*, 3: 95–99.

[100] *Maktūbāt*, 3: 95. According to Munzavī, the Saljūqs were self-conscious about their Turkish heritage as their rule was simultaneously monitored by two non-Turkish forces: the Caliph, an Arab, and their Persian subjects. He argues that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and his friends, ʿAzīz al-Dīn among them, were against the Saljūq Turks who had occupied their country. They favored an Iranian government and in choosing between foreign rulers, would have preferred the Arabs over the Turks.

Munzavī's latter observation could very well be true. However, it seems implausible that any anti-Turkish sentiment could produce such havoc and fierce reaction from Maḥmūd and Ṭughrul after him. Moreover, ʿAzīz al-Dīn and the other statesmen who were arrested and executed at the time were already part of the Saljūq administration and had served in the system for decades. ʿAzīz al-Dīn, for instance, was executed in his very late 50s. The information from this era does not give us any clear answers on the purges in the Saljūq court or ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's relation to them. It is possible that al-Dargazīnī was indeed a vicious, wicked, envious character. Perhaps he so loathed men superior to himself that he was secretly contriving the death of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and his prestigious friends and carried out his wish at the right moment. It is possible that the Saljūq rulers fell prey to his plots against other statesmen who were considered potential enemies in their divided dynasty. It is also possible that Maḥmūd was blinded by greed and in an attempt to keep the wealth of his deceased wives, the two daughters of Sanjar, approved the arrest of ʿAzīz al-Dīn. Perhaps ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and his friends, the Ālūh of Iṣfahān among them, detested the Saljūq Turks and provoked them.

ʿAyn al-Quḍāt was anticipating arrest and execution long before it happened. He foretells his execution on numerous occasions in his personal correspondence as well as in his treatises. Moreover, he asserts his desire for death with longing, with a curious nostalgia for it. He longs to be rid of this death called living. In the *Tamhīdāt*, for instance, he refers to his preparedness for death as he talks about his ability to produce wonders (*karāmāt*). He explains that in the city they call him a sorcerer because they neither understand his connection to the unseen (*ghayb)* nor his *karāmāt*.[101] ʿAyn al-Quḍāt continues his discussion on others' perception of him, his *karāmāt*, and his desire for death, by referring to a letter from his friend Kāmil al-Dawla. It reads as follows:[102]

> Kāmil al-Dawla wa al-Dīn has written that in the city they say ʿAyn al-Quḍāt claims he is God. And they issue *fatwa* asking for my death (appeal to the sacred laws for my death). O friend, if they ask you to *fatwa* for my death, do it. My will to all is to write the following verse as *fatwa*: "God has beautiful names, and we beseech Him by those. And those who make haste in burying in His name shall be punished for

[101] *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 327–28, pp. 249–51. He does not disclose the identity of those who do not understand him.

[102] Ibid., sec. 329, pp. 251–52.

> their deeds."[103] I myself ask for this death in my prayers. Alas, it is still far off.

ʿAyn al-Quḍāt is said to have described the details of his execution in the following verses:[104]

> We ask God for death and martyrdom
> And that we want by three worthless things
> If the friend does what we want
> We want fire, oil, and straw

In his writings ʿAyn al-Quḍāt compares himself to Ḥusayn ibn Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj, the famous tenth-century martyr mystic who also expressed longing for death and is said to have foretold the circumstances of his own execution.[105] Abd el-Jalil draws on this comparison and refers to ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's detailed description of the circumstances of his execution as follows:[106]

> Similar to Ḥallāj, he was subjected to cruel torture before he joined the annihilation that he so desired. Skinned alive, he was then put on the gallows. When detached, he was wrapped in a straw mat soaked in oil, and was set on fire. He had himself predicted this end in a quatrain: "We ask God for death and martyrdom .... We ask for fire, oil, and straw." He was executed on the evening of Wednesday 7 Jumādā II of the year 525 (May 7, 525 A.H.). Al-Subkī adds that as ʿAyn al-Quḍāt was approaching the gallows he recited this verse of the *Qurʾān* (the end of the verse xxvi): "And the one who commits injustice will know what is in reserve for him."

ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's writings indicate that he was a provocative personality. His bold discussion on death and the unseen and his boastful allusions to his *karāmāt* are testaments to how he could be perceived as a threat. Moreover, his unrelenting scrutiny of the givens of faith, as well as his superb intelligence and growing popularity, provoked much envy and caused treachery toward him among his adversaries. In some of his personal letters, he scorned the ruling elite and the political culture of his time. He complained about an ambiance that fostered hypocrisy and scholarly pretense.[107] Whereas some of his commentators see ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's personality and his mystical views as the justification for

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[103] *Qurʾān*: 7: 180.
[104] Hidāyat, *Riyāḍ al-ʿĀrifīn*, p.109.
[105] *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 329, pp. 251–52.
[106] Abd el-Jalil, "Sakwa-l-Garīb", p. 18.
[107] *Maktūbāt*, 1: 243–44.

his execution, some have considered the political scene of the Saljūq rule as the key to unraveling the mystery of his death. However, that history is too evasive to provide satisfactory answers.

Like Munzavī, Hamid Dabashi in his 1999 study of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, views the Saljūq political climate as the key to understanding ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's arrest and execution.[108] Dabashi takes issue with the perspective that evaluates his execution as a consequence of his reckless attitude toward life: an attitude that was based on his desire for death.[109] Moreover, he argues against the perspective that compares ʿAyn al-Quḍāt with Ḥusayn ibn Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj. He sees ʿAyn al-Quḍāt as an intellectual at a specific juncture in history. Dabashi's project describes the political and the intellectual history of this period and ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's place in it. However, as he describes the complex history of the Saljūq court, Dabashi ultimately explains: "The danger ʿAyn al-Quḍāt poses for the religious and political powers and for which danger he is brutally eliminated, is that he dares to counter-imagine the received faith."[110] This perspective, reluctantly, leads the reader to the *Shakwā al-Gharīb* where ʿAyn al-Quḍāt defends himself against the charges of heresy.

ʿUsayrān, in the introduction to his edition of the *Shakwā al-Gharīb*, declares this text as the most authentic document on ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's conviction and eventual death.[111] ʿUsayrān explains, there are only a few definitive pieces of information on his conviction. He identifies them to be (1) the *Shakwā al-Gharīb* and the information it contains (2) al-Dargazīnī's central role in the arrest and execution of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, and (3) the date of the execution. Aside from these, ʿUsayrān explains, no one can know what had exactly happened.

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[108] Dabashi, *Truth and Narrative*, pp. 97–99.

[109] Dabashi takes issue with the scholars who compare ʿAyn al-Quḍāt with Ḥallāj, arguing that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt foretold his own execution and was resolved on it. ʿUsayrān, Arberry and Lewisohn examine the similarities between him and Ḥallāj and argue that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt aspired to Ḥallāj in respect to his mystical doctrines and also his longing for death. Leonard Lewisohn, "In Quest of Annihilation: Imaginalization and Mystical Death in the Tamhīdāt of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadhānī," in *Classical Persian Sufism: From Its Origins to Rumi*, edited by Lewisohn (London: Khaniqahi Nimatullahi Publications, 1993), pp. 332–33.

[110] Dabashi, *Truth and Narrative*, p. 588.

[111] ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, *Shakwā al-Gharīb ʿan al-Awṭān ilā ʿUlamāʾ al-Buldān*, in *Muṣannafāt*, edited by ʿAfīf ʿUsayrān (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Dānishgāh-i Tehran, 1962), p. 5.

## Shakwā: *Defence against Heresy*

ʿAyn al-Quḍāt does not identify his adversaries but in the *Shakwā al-Gharīb* indicates that his enemies are motivated by envy toward him. He outlines the charges against him as follows: (1) his views on God as the all-encompassing Being with limited knowledge of the particulars (2) his views on prophecy as a stage past the stage of reason and the stage of sainthood, and (3) his views on the role of the spiritual leader (*imām*) in the life of the believer. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt presents his case arguing that his adversaries have distorted his views. He explains and supports his ideas by referring to the sayings of the Prophet, Abū Bakr, and ʿAlī, as well as prominent scholars of theology and mysticism. He calls attention to the intended meaning of certain terminology that the mystics use in their writings, and asks the reader to pay heed to the specialized use of these technical terms. He explains that scholars, in all branches of knowledge, have communicated their ideas with each other by using technical vocabulary that is specific to their field. Terms such as subsisting (*baqāʾ*), annihilation (*fanāʾ*), contraction (*qabḍ*), expansion *(basṭ)*, etc., convey an etymology that belongs to an intellectual history going back to the time of the Prophet.[112] ʿAyn al-Quḍāt explains this specialized discourse is further defined by the specific context of a given argument. He explains that his enemies have taken some of his ideas out of context in order to produce a case against him.[113] He declares their arguments against him to be biased and wrong.

For example, they accused him of sharing the views of the shīʿi Ismāʿīlīs. The Ismāʿīlīs were identified as the advocates of an esoteric knowledge of God and the *Qurʾān*; they considered the recipient of this knowledge as God's viceroy on earth and the only suitable person to lead the Muslim community.[114] The rhetorics of this stance fell on the Caliph whose rule as the legitimate sovereign of God in the Islamic

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[112] Ibid., pp. 44–50.

[113] Ibid., p. 51. Cf. Arberry, *A Sufi Martyr*, p. 53:

> When the intelligent and impartial person hears such expressions, he ought to refer for their meaning to the one using them, saying, 'What did you mean by these words?' To pass judgement against the speaker, before seeking from him an explanation of what was intended by these expressions, and to condemn him as an atheist and a heretic, is truly a shot in the dark.

[114] Farhad Daftary, *The Ismāʿīlīs: Their History and Doctrines* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 87:

empire was now assailed. Moreover, Ismāʿīlīs had already produced a dynasty (the tenth-century Fāṭimid dynasty in Egypt) that claimed governance over the entire Islamic world. Consequently, shīʿism as a whole was viewed by the Caliph and his subject rulers, the Saljūqs—being the most devout among them—as a threat and an adversary. In the Iran of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, this situation had intensified after the capture of the Alamūt a few years before the birth of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt.[115]

In the *Shakwā al-Gharīb*, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt disclaims any association between himself and the Ismāʿīlīs. He argues this point in the discussion on knowledge by proximity (*al-ʿilm al-ladunnī*) and the discussion on "sin" and "infallibility." He declares that the quality of the relationship between the disciple and the teacher and the kind of knowledge they share are but a few instances that articulate his pronounced distinction from the Ismāʿīlīs. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt is outraged that his adversaries have intentionally blurred the distinction between him and the Ismāʿīlīs in an attempt to create a case against him. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt lived at a volatile time when being an original thinker was dangerous. At the time, associating one's views with the dissident shīʿi movements was a viable excuse for arrest and persecution—as mentioned earlier, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's notorious enemy, al-Dargazīnī was also sent to the gallows for his suspicious relationship with the Ismāʿīlīs.

ʿAyn al-Quḍāt explains that the role of the spiritual leader (*imām*) in the life of the novice is to protect him from going astray in his seeking after the truth.[116] He then quotes from the tradition (*ḥadith)*

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Shīʿī esotericism found its fullest development in Ismāʿīlism, by far the most representative of the Shīʿī sects designated with the term Bāṭiniyya; referring to those who give primacy to the inner, esoteric, or Bāṭṭinī meaning behind the literal wording of all religious texts and formulations.

[115] Alamūt is the name of the fortress near the town of Qazvīn in the northwestern Alburz mountain region of Iran. It was captured by the followers of Ḥasan Ṣabbāḥ (d. A.D. 1124) in A.D. 1090 and fell in A.D. 1256 during the Mongol invasion of Iran in the 13th century.

The distance between Hamadhān and Qazvīn, the major city near Alamūt, is 40 leagues (*farsang*) or 240 kilometers. Ibn Khurdādbih, *Al-Masālik wa al-Mamālik*, p. 12, in www.alwaraq.com, accessed 08–12–2003.

[116] *Shakwā al-Gharīb*, p. 35. Cf. Arberry, *A Sufi Martyr*, p. 34:

> Another matter over which they have criticized me concerns certain chapters wherein I have spoken of the need of the neophyte for a spiritual instructor to conduct him to the path of truth and to guide him on the straight road, so that he may not stray from the right way. A sound Tradition (*ḥadīth*) informs us that God's Messenger (God bless him) said, "Whoever dies without an *imām*, dies the death of a pagan." Abū Yazīd al-Biṣṭāmī said, "If a man has no master, his imam is Satan."

and the great masters of Islamic mysticism who all talk about this subject. In the *Shakwā al-Gharīb*, he does not discuss what is the right path and what is deviation from it. Instead, he declares his own dissociation from the shīʿi Ismāʿīlīs who advocate following the infallible leader as a requirement in attaining knowledge of God. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt further explains the distinction between the Ismāʿīlīs and himself by explaining that his arguments abide by the methodology of rational speculation, which is not relevant to the Ismāʿīlīs' teachings. The latter consider the Prophet and the infallible leader (*imām*) as the source for the understanding of religious doctrines.[117]

The other charge against ʿAyn al-Quḍāt is his discussion of God's omniscient knowledge. The all-encompassing relationship of God to the creation means His knowledge embraces all of creation. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt is not advocating a pantheistic view of God. To say that everything comes from God's omnipotence does not mean that God is multiple.[118] In the chapter, *On Faith in God and His Attributes*, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt expands on the omniscient and the omnipresent nature of God by emphasizing that all of creation, even its smallest particles, are subject to His eternal knowledge.[119] In *Zubdat al-Ḥaqāʾiq* he talks extensively about the unity of God and His knowledge of the details (*juzʾīyāt*) and argues that while there are distinctions and inequalities

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ʿAmr b. Sanān al-Manbijī, one of the great Sufi shaykhs, said, "A man who has not been to school with a master, such a man is an imposter." The sufi expositors of the true reality are unanimous in declaring that he who has no shaykh is without religion. This was what I meant to say in the chapters in question. My adversary, however, had chosen to interpret my words as being in line with the doctrine of the Ismāʿīlīs, understanding me to subscribe to the belief in the infallible Imām.

[117] *Shakwā al-Gharīb*, pp. 35–36.

[118] Ibid., p. 52. Cf. Arberry, *A Sufi Martyr*, p. 54:

The sense of these words is exactly the same as what I conveyed in a section of the aforesaid treatise. I wrote, 'The truth is that God is the Multiple and the All, and that what is beside Him is the single and the part'. The meaning is that all existing things, in relation to the grandeur of His Essence, are as the part to the whole, the single to the multiple; since all existing things are but a drop from the ocean of His omnipotence. I did not mean by that that God was multiple in His parts—high exalted is God indeed above being open to division.

[119] *Shakwā al-Gharīb*, p. 69. Cf. Arberry, *A Sufi Martyr*, p. 84:

Nought escapes from His eternal knowledge, not so much as the weight of an atom, such as a grain of dust; indeed, His knowledge of what is under His earth is as His knowledge of what is above in heaven. All existing things are, in the expanse of His knowledge, as a drop in the oceans, a sandgrain in the deserts. No glance eludes his design, no thought His will. Whatsoever He wills, is; whatsoever He wills not, is not.

among the created things, they hold the same status in relation to God.[120]

> He is all encompassing, "Our Lord can reach out to the utmost recesses of things by his knowledge."[121] In other words, if he did not know that it existed it would not have existed; whatever exists or does not exist must enter into the compass of his knowledge on equal basis; human reasoning is incapable of conceiving that.

It is human reason that fails to comprehend the extensions of the knowledge of God, which is eternal and incomprehensible in temporal and spacial frames of reference.[122] *Zubdat al-Ḥaqāʾiq* explains that the temporal nature of creation subjugates our mind to the degree that we are deluded into comparing the omniscient and the omnipresent attributes of God with the limited cognitive qualities of man. Consequently, some ask how can God have knowledge of the particulars, not knowing that the eternal knowledge of God is unaffected by the transient quality of temporal knowledge.[123] God's encompassing knowledge is incomprehensible to man because man is only exposed to the expressions of this knowledge in the world. Naturally, God's relationship with this world and His knowledge of the particulars remain beyond our reach. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt explains that when creation is looked upon through the perspective of reason it is perceived in a hierarchical order in respect to time, status, and qualities. The relationship of God to creation is not determined by any stratum because God is omnipresent and in an equal relationship to all of creation. Moreover, God's knowledge of the particulars is independent of the creatures' knowledge of Him.[124]

The nature of prophethood is an example of the kind of knowledge that human reason cannot appropriate. In *Zubdat al-Ḥaqāʾiq*, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt explains that faith in prophethood is faith in the unseen (*ghayb*). This kind of faith, however, does not imply that the unseen can be grasped by one possessed of reason. In the *Shakwā al-Gharīb*, and specifically in the chapter "On Faith in Prophethood," ʿAyn al-Quḍāt asserts that prophethood is the stage past sainthood, which is the stage past reason. Prophethood is a stage that involves qualities

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[120] *Zubdat al-Ḥaqāʾiq*, p. 24.
[121] *Qurʾān*, 7: 89.
[122] *Zubdat al-Ḥaqāʾiq*, sec. 15, pp. 23–24.
[123] Ibid., sec. 12, p.22.
[124] Ibid., sec. 15, pp. 23–24.

that reason cannot attain but can attest to and confirm.[125] While this argument is presented tersely in the *Shakwā al-Gharīb,* it is extensively discussed in the *Tamhīdāt* and in the *Zubdat al-Ḥaqāʾiq.* These documents explain what the author means by the words prophethood and faith. This discussion in the *Tamhīdāt* is comprehensive and conveys faith in the prophethood as faith in the unseen (*ghayb*). This argument does not imply that the believer (the one possessed of reason) can have direct knowledge of the unseen. *Zubdat al-Ḥaqāʾiq* approaches the same issues in a less esoteric style. There he explains:[126]

> Perhaps you would ask: what is the path that one with reason must traverse in order to find a firm stance in faith in prophethood? I would say: the path of one who does not have any taste for poetry until he receives his objective by association with those who have this talent. And there are many who do not have the taste for poetry and do not understand the difference between poetry and prose but attest to this aptitude among others. And their merit is in understanding this difference [between themselves and those who have the gift of poetry] and this is due to the frequency of their association with those who were not deprived of this aptitude. And they became firm believers in the unseen.

He explains that the aptitude for poetry is a metaphor for understanding one's own strengths and limitations in acquiring different kinds of knowledge. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's discussion is inspired by a similar comparison in Ghazzālī's *Mishkāt al-Anwār* when the author describes the distinction between ordinary people and the prophets and friends of God.[127] Like ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, Ghazzālī explains that beyond the stage of reason is the prophetic stage, which is incomprehensible by those who do not have access to it. The prophetic stage is similar to the inspirational state that we associate with poetry. In the prophetic stage, the prophets and some wayfarers observe "flashes" of the unseen, mysteries of heaven and earth and other divine (*rabbānī*) mysteries. This kind of knowledge is not available to all, just as the taste for poetry, which is a kind of feeling and perception, is reserved for some.[128] This is an appropriate analogy considering ʿAyn al-Quḍāt,

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[125] *Shakwā al-Gharīb*, pp. 70–72.

[126] *Zubdat al-Ḥaqāʾiq*, p. 31.

[127] Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad Ghazzālī, *The Niche of Lights* (*Mishkāt al-Anwār*), translated by David Buchman (Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1998), pp. 37–38; henceforth cited as Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad Ghazzālī, *The Niche of Lights*.

[128] Ibid., pp. 37–39.

whose diction is replete with verse and metaphor. He argues that the inspired state of the prophet can be acknowledged by others, just as a man who may not have the talent for composing poetry can acknowledge and appreciate this talent in another person.[129] In this context, poetry is the occasion to communicate the inspired state of the poet on the one hand and the keen nature of the man who is possessed of reason and is capable of appreciating poetry, on the other hand. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's methodology of rational speculation (*burhān*) describes the unseen and makes it comprehensible through poetic images and by means of analogy.[130]

The *Shakwā al-Gharīb* gives us specific information by ʿAyn al-Quḍāt about his arrest and conviction. In the *Shakwā al-Gharīb*, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt argues his case, communicates his views on knowledge of the unseen and the nature of prophethood, dissociates himself from the Ismāʿīlīs, and makes an appeal for freedom from prison in Baghdād. The arrangement and orchestration of these arguments produce the complex and rhetorical text of the *Shakwā al-Gharīb*, which can be read on different levels as an apologia and a metaphor for one's longing for the homeland.

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[129] *Shakwā al-Gharīb*, pp. 33–34. Cf. A. J. Arberry, *A Sufi Martyr*, pp. 32–33:

> ... inasmuch as it is reason that proves the veracity of the Prophets. Now I do not claim that faith in prophecy is dependent upon the appearance of a stage beyond the stage of reason. What I claim is rather that the inner nature of prophcey indicates a stage beyond the stage of sainthood, and that sainthood indicates a stage beyond the stage of reason, as I have pointed out above. The nature of a thing is one thing, and the means of realizing it is another: it is possible for a man possessed of reason to reach by way of reason belief in the existence of a stage which he has not yet attained personally. Thus, a man may be deprived of the taste for poetry, and yet he may come to recognize the existence of something in the man possessing such taste, whilst at the same time he must confess total ignorance of the nature of that thing.

[130] *Shakwā al-Gharīb*, pp. 35–36.

CHAPTER TWO

# LONGING FOR THE HOMELAND

After his release from the Baghdād prison, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt was reprimanded by some of his associates for writing the *Shakwā al-Gharīb* and appealing to his captors to set him free. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt argued that *Shakwā al-Gharīb* could not be interpreted at face value as it contained mystical meanings that were hidden from the uninitiated. These arguments are found in a personal letter (Letter 98) written to one of his disenchanted critics whose identity remains unknown.[131] The letter is enveloped in an aura of sarcasm and mockery, which express ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's frustration as he responds to the main criticisms. He justifies *Shakwā al-Gharīb* as an inspirational piece and explains that the prison in Baghdād inspired him to write about the existential predicament of the soul in exile from the homeland and trapped in the prison-house of the body. He reiterates that *Shakwā al-Gharīb* transcends the actual confines of his imprisonment in Baghdād, functioning as a metaphor that summons the adept to aspire to the mystical path as the way out of this prison.

The present chapter concerns itself with the issue of exile, imprisonment, and the return journey home. *Shakwā al-Gharīb* belongs in the genre of the medieval prison-writings that are an intimation of the tribulations of the soul in the material realm. But it also functions as a platform for the author to defend himself before his captors and claim his right to be released from prison. In its capacity as a mystical treatise, which is filled with allusions to the existential agonies of humankind, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt treats a theme that was previously investigated at length in Plato's *Apology* for Socrates and the visionary recitals of Avicenna. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and these other authors shared a similar fate in their relationship with the state authorities: they were accused of offense against society and put into prison. In turn, they used their incarceration as an opportunity to speak about the soul in the body. The writings of Plato on Socrates' trial and eventual death, the visionary recitals of Avicenna, and ʿAyn

[131] "Letter 98," in *Maktūbāt*, 2: 355–63. The English translation of this letter is available in the *Appendix*.

al-Quḍāt's defense, describe how these authors saw their own imprisonment as a metaphor for the plight of the soul, with prison a metaphor for the dark density of matter, and home a substitute for the original homeland.

The forlorn state of the soul in exile from its homeland where it basked in the glory of God, is a major theme that is discussed extensively in Islamic mystical literature of medieval Iran. Prominent writers and scholars who wrote on this subject include Sanāʾī Ghaznawī (d. A.D. 1131) the author of *Sayr al-ʿlbād ilā al-Maʿād* (The Journey of the Servants to the Place of Return), Abū Ḥāmid and Aḥmad Ghazzālī, Farīd al-Dīn Aṭṭār (d. A.D. 1220) the author of *Manṭīq al-Ṭayr* (The Conference of Birds), and the celebrated Rūmī (d. A.D. 1273). The latter stand out as popular authors worldwide. Rūmī's famous *Nay Nāmih* (Tale of the Reed) is a poem that artists and writers still admire. Aṭṭār's allegorical tale about the journey of a flock of birds in search of the fabulous bird *sīmūrq* (griffin) comes to end with the realization that their destination and the beloved were never far from them, but rather within their own heart. The journey offers this invaluable knowledge, which must be arrived at by the individual wayfarer. *The Conference of Birds* has been studied extensively over the years and been translated into other languages. Another important work in this category is the treatise *Qiṣṣat al-Ghurba al-Gharbīya* (The Tale of Occidental Exile) by Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī al-Maqtūl (d. A.D. 1191).[132] This text is a confluence of autobiography and allegory. Suhrawardī ventures to remedy a shortcoming in the mystical treatises of the Muslim master of Peripatetic philosophy, Avicenna. He fashions his allegory after Avicenna's visionary accounts of the spiritual journey for self-discovery: *Risālat Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* (Recital of Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān), *Risālat al-Ṭayr* (Recital of the Bird), and *Risālat Salāmān wa Absāl* (Recital of Salāmān and Absāl).

ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's *Shakwā al-Gharīb* is not an allegory, but a complex narrative that propels the plot with metaphors and intimations. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt explains that his captivity away from his homeland Hamadhān is the major metaphor under consideration. The text adopts a discursive narrative structure, which is autobiographical and

[132] Shihāb al-Dīn Abū al-Futūḥ Yaḥyā ibn Ḥabash ibn Amīrak al-Suhrawardī (A.D. 1154–91), was the initiator of the philosophical school named the philosophy of Illumination. He was born in the city of Suhraward in Iran and was executed in Aleppo on the order of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Ayyūbī, presumably for his teachings concerning the perfect ruler, the philosopher-king.

explicates the author's scholarship on Islamic mysticism. The rhetorical nature of the defense convinces ʿAyn al-Quḍāt to be selective about presenting and withholding evidence in order to advance his arguments strategically and tactfully. For instance, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt does not mention some of his major writings. Consequently, when in "Letter 98" he refers to the metaphorical nature of his defense, he must be specifically recalling the beginning sections of the *Shakwā al-Gharīb* where he laments his imprisonment in Baghdād and beseeches his captors for release. It is logical that the personal tone of the defense in the beginning is extended into a biographical discussion concerning the author's work on mysticism as a scholarly discipline. In this manner, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt combines his appeal for release from the Baghdād prison with his discussion on his life achievements and his sense of alienation from this world. These subjects, juxtaposed against each other, constitute the plot of the *Shakwā al-Gharīb*.

### *Response to Reproof*

"Letter 98" justifies the significance of the homeland in ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's defense treatise. He begins the letter in his familiar affectionate voice, but a tone of irony immediately breaks through in his mocking consent to the objections that are directed against him and in his exaggerated depiction of his jubilation on having heard from his addressee in the first place. The beginning lines of the letter are as follows:[133]

> I read the consolation that came from the great and endeared brother, may God prolong his life and make his end more blessed than his worldly life. My soul received abundant peace and comfort from it. I welcomed those elegant words and subtle meanings wholeheartedly and these verses came to my mind:
>
> Your letter arrived: it was colorful;
> It made me vivacious with joy.
>
> The gardens, seeing your letter, withered with envy;
> The pearl dissolved, abashed by its eloquence.
>
> I filled my ears with passages from it,
> Until I covered its lines with kisses

[133] *Maktūbāt*, "Letter 98," sec. 550.

ʿAyn al-Quḍāt continues by reminding his critic that his reading of the *Shakwā al-Gharīb* had been hasty and careless. Had he read the text more carefully, he would have observed its subtle treatment of mystical meanings. Instead, his critic rushed to judgment and accused ʿAyn al-Quḍāt of being impatient for release from prison. He further accused ʿAyn al-Quḍāt of being verbose and rhetorical in his longing for Hamadhān. These objections are based on his interpretation of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's lofty use of the literary idiom. In the *Shakwā al-Gharīb*, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt uses an erudite style in describing his loneliness and alienation (*ghurba)*. He invokes verses by celebrated Arab poets such as Abū Tammām[134] and Bashshār ibn Burd[135] who likewise shared his connection with Hamadhān or suffered harm at the hand of foes. These poets reflect on separation and loneliness, and thus bear witness to ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's affliction and bring solace to him. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt is a superb writer who consistently demonstrates unparalleled authorial command over his subject. In the case of *Shakwā al-Gharīb*, he is intent on exhibiting the breath and depth of his learning and his intellectual scholarship as proof that the envious treachery of his enemies was provoked by his exceptional intelligence.[136]

> I did not want to leave a few points unattended, may God out of His graciousness keep us against errors. First: you were astonished by the description of the longing for the homeland; had you studied these chapters in their entirety you would not have found room for this objection. In a similar vein, Balāl al-Ḥabashī, may God be pleased with him, and the Prophet, praise be upon him, yearned for the mountains and the streams of Mecca. This is what we understand from the apparent qualities. In addition, your objection that in my diction, I was verbose and rhetorical rather than unrestricted, is exactly true; your words speak my heart. Indeed, the best poetry is the most untrue and the verbose is the twin of the poets. That is why I renounced both of them and admitted that the perfection of both of these crafts is that which is adorned with deceit. When the wayfarer understands the harm in lying, he will cease doing it. That is all!

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[134] Abū Tammām Ḥabīb ibn Aws (A.D. 804–45) is the famous Arab panegyrist. He stayed in Hamadhān on his way back from Nayshāpūr where he composed his famous anthology, *Ḥamāsa*.

[135] Bashshār ibn Burd (A.D. 714–84) was an Iraqi poet of Persian descent. His family was from eastern Iran. Praised as a court poet, he was accomplished in different genres of poetry. His elegies won him wide renown. Bashshār became notorious for his *shuʿūbī* ideas and was accused of heterodoxy for which he was attacked and brutally killed.

[136] *Maktūbāt*, "Letter 98," sec. 551.

The passages that seem "verbose and rhetorical" to his disappointed and critical friend, are orchestrated in their present form to communicate how the author sees himself as part of an intellectual heritage that is shared by other eminent persons who were subjected to the ordeals of exile and imprisonment. This observation is extended into the universal condition of the soul who is in exile in this realm of material existence. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt explains that the literary qualities of the *Shakwā al-Gharīb* might make him comparable to poets, writers, and rhetoricians. However, in contrast to them, the eloquence of his diction and his skillful use of the high literary culture are not intended to fabricate alluring deceits. His obviously literary manner of expression is intended to communicate a truth that can be imparted only through poetic language and imagery. In the *Shakwā al-Gharīb*, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt uses the emotive, flowery language of poetry because it is less remote from the realities of the spiritual realms that are translated as signs and symbols on the material plain. In the same way, the places that he evokes, Hamadhān and Mecca among them, are reminiscent of an spiritual geography that is invisible to the corporeal sight. Finally, the truth that he alludes to is the longing of the soul for its true homeland, and the freedom that he seeks extends to the condition of the soul that is exiled from the homeland.[137]

> Dear friend! Be aware! Do not treat lightly the words of the lovers. "There is, in their stories, instruction for men endowed with understanding." Behold, they are talking about Jacob. Do you think "And his eyes became white with sorrow. And he fell into silent melancholy" is because of his separation from Joseph or for something else? If he was suffering this pain on account of Joseph, then since it is permissible for the prophets to suffer such a pain, the entire world is justified in its longing for the friend. "How great is my grief for Joseph!"[138] This sigh means a different world of meaning for the Lord of love. In fact, that pain was not on behalf of Joseph. Joseph was a sign for another affair. Therefore, objections are not admissible. One should look at *Alwand* and *Mawashān*, and the tales of the lovers, with appreciation. This pain and complaint are not entirely about Hamadhān; they are about something else. Prison, is separation from the beloved; release, is finding the beloved.

ʿAyn al-Quḍāt explains that in *Shakwā al-Gharīb*, the mountains and the prairies of Hamadhān—*Alwand* and *Mawashān*—are metaphors

[137] Ibid., sec. 557.
[138] *Qurʾān*, 12: 84.

for the spiritual plains where harm and treachery have never set foot. A man who has seen these sites and has partaken of their delights knows that he is a prisoner in the world of matter, which seems like a dungeon or a dark cave that he must escape. In contrast to the dismal pit that we call life, the spiritual quality of the place that he calls home redeems the soul. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt imagines that these climes can make anyone, even a man's foes, rejoice so greatly that hostility is taken out of their minds.

> Me thinks I see the Iraqi caravan arriving at Hamadhan, and setting down their loads on the slopes of Mawashan. The heights and valleys there are verdant green, bedecked by spring in raiment which all other lands would envy. Her flowers waft abroad as it were the scent of musk, her rivers flow with crystal-limpid water. The travellers alight amid elegant gardens, and betake themselves to the shade of leafy trees. They begin to chant over and over again this verse, and they cooing like doves and warbling like nightingales:
>
> O Hamadhan, may copious rain
> Water abundantly thy plain,
> Nor may fresh showers ever fail,
> O Mawashan, thy fertile vale.[139]

The Iraqi caravan, by implication, takes ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's current jailers from Baghdād to Hamadhān. Through this journey they become strangers in a new place where they discover the magical qualities of a land that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt yearns for. The journey to Hamadhān makes them understand the true meaning of prison and freedom. They realize that in Baghdād they were prisoners without knowing it themselves. Arriving at Hamadhān and the spiritual plain that it stands for, these travellers jump with joy and astonishment. Their reaction to this locale brings to light their ignorance thus far about the possibility of such happiness. Upon reaching these plains, the Iraqis celebrate their newly found resting station in Hamadhān: a new land to them, but home to ʿAyn al-Quḍāt. The caravan feasts on the beauty of Hamadhān and its paradisiac delights. In fact, the exhilaration that these travellers experience so transforms them that their voices echo the sound of the doves and the nightingales in the gardens of paradise. These travellers are free like the birds who praise beautiful gardens in their songs of delight.

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[139] *Shakwā al-Gharīb*, p. 28. Cf. Arberry, *A Sufi Martyr*, p. 26.

In the letter to his disapproving friend, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt cites the *Qurʾān* in order to make clearer the issue of the homeland and its metaphorical treatment in the *Shakwā al-Gharīb*.[140]

> If Moses, peace be upon him, yearned for mount Sinai, his yearning was not for dirt and pebbles. And if in the eternal *Qurʾān* he takes a vow on these two mountains, the Fig and the Olive (*al-tīn wa al-zaytūn*),[141] that vow is not on the earth and stones. Alas, no one except lovers can understand the mysteries of love.

The Qurʾānic verse, *al-tīn*, points to four sacred symbols: the fig, the olive, mount Sinai, and Mecca. The fig represents man who, like the fruit, can be full of delight and sweetness or with corruption. The olive refers to the Mount of Olives, where the Gospel unfolds. Sinai is the locus for the message of Moses. This city of security, which the Prophet Muḥammad refers to, is Mecca or the site of the revelation. These locations signify the prophetic mission and its validity. They allude to elements that belong to this world and this humanity but extend beyond them and connect with the other realms of reality. The fig is a parable for the nature of man. The mountains and the plains stand for places where God has addressed humanity. The Prophet takes a vow on this history in order to attest to the noble creation of man who at the same time is destined to be ensnared by matter and thus be the "lowest of the low."

ʿAyn al-Quḍāt reiterates that his allusions to Hamadhān express mystical meanings. He wishes to return to his homeland because on the soul level he does not belong to the corporeal world and desires to return to his eternal home. He also wishes to be released from the Baghdād prison and go back to Hamadhān, where as a child he was suckled and adored by those who love him. Hamadhān is a place like Mecca, the Mount of Olives, and Sinai, where ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, as another inspired man, hears the call of God and follows the path of mysticism. Pondering his present predicament, he remembers his separation from the homeland and from his home. He suffers the pain of imprisonment in a strange land that reminds him of his double exile as a man and as a spirit.[142]

> You ask: What is this longing for Hamadhān? I am attached to Hamadhān. Should I say I am not?

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[140] *Maktūbāt*, "Letter 98," sec. 556.
[141] *Qurʾān*, 95: 1–3.
[142] *Maktūbāt*, "Letter 98," sec. 561.

Indeed I cry because of my exile:
The eyes of the stranger always cry,
The day I left my land
I was wrong.
I wonder why I left
My homeland where my love is

ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's nostalgia for Hamadhān reflects both the condition of his soul and his desire for return to his home and abode in the city of his birth. Thus, he invites the reader to appreciate the state of the wayfarer who is cast away into this world, and to perceive the true meaning of *Alwand* and *Māwashān* as celestial plains. The stranger (*al-gharīb*) is one who is aware of his state of exile: a condition that he becomes sentient of through mystical practice and visionary perception of the unseen. Although the imprisonment of this young scholar in the dungeons of Baghdād is the occasion and the inspiration for *Shakwā al-Gharīb*, in his letter of response to his critic ʿAyn al-Quḍāt maintains that his apologia is a testimonial on exile and a complaint against the separation of the soul from its homeland.

## *Reaching the Homeland*, Apologia *of Plato and Avicennan* Recitals

As is the case with *Shakwā al-Gharīb*, the *Apology* of Plato (427–347 B.C.) and the *Recital of Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* by Avicenna (A.D. 980–1037) were composed when their narrators were being attacked by state authorities.[143] Prison and trial inspired these authors to write some of the most important treatises on the exile of the soul and its homecoming. Plato and Avicenna had a formative influence on medieval Islamic thought in general and on ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's intellectual milieu in particular. Needless to say, these thinkers were considered archetypal paradigms of knowledge and wisdom for the scholars of the medieval world at large. They were especially important for thinkers like the Ghazzālī brothers and Suhrawardī al-Maqtūl, the founder of the Illuminationist school, who belonged to the same twelfth-century

[143] Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAbdallāh ibn Sīnā was born in Afshana near Bukhārā and died in Hamadhān. His philosophical views were influenced by Aristotle, al-Fārābī, and Plotinus. Avicenna was a vizir in the court of ʿAlāʾ al-Dawla in Hamadhān, where he served a prison term for political reasons. He composed the visionary recitals *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān, Salāmān and Absāl*, and the *Recital of the Birds*, during this time.

intellectual and spiritual milieu that represented ʿAyn al-Quḍāt. Suhrawardī's intuitive philosophy of Illumination relied on the teachings of the ancient philosopher/demiurge Hermes Trismegistus and Plato. Hermes and Plato described their direct experience of God and the divine realm as a form of death whereby the soul separates from the body and sees the divine light.[144] Gradually, Suhrawardī gave prominence to Plato over others like Aristotle and the ancient Zoroastrian sages of Persia who had exerted influence upon his thinking. Suhrawardī described the Illuminationist philosophy as the restoration of the heritage of Plato.[145] Plato's renown among Muslim medieval scholars, which reached its apex in the teachings of Suhrawardī, was his ability to conjoin the intuitive and the discursive aspects of gnosis.

The dialogues of Plato and the allegorical treatises of Avicenna on the subject of the exile of the soul and the interpretation of death as the vehicle for reaching the homeland, resonate with the arguments of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt. He was familiar with Plato, if not directly, through the writings of Ghazzālī, and with Avicenna directly through his texts. He refers to Avicenna in several places in his writings. In the *Tamhīdāt*, he praises Avicenna for his discussions on eschatology and the issue of the resurrection of the soul. The *Tamhīdāt* distinguishes Avicenna as the teacher who partook of the truth and recklessly summoned the others toward the "path of pathlessness" (*rāh-i bī rāh-ī*).[146] Upon this path visionary insight offsets the existing norms of religious belief because the truth that Avicenna points to is in variance with notional Islam. Remembering Avicenna inspires ʿAyn al-Quḍāt to recite the following verses:[147]

> On the path of love, unbelief and heresy (*tarsāʾī)* are better
> In the vicinity of your tavern, infamy is better;
> Wearing the *zunnār* instead of the habit of unity, is better
> Insanity, insanity, insanity, is better.

He identifies with Avicenna's brave approach to knowledge and regards it as a new paradigm in philosophical thought. It is sound to say that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's discussion at this stage in his life demonstrates

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[144] John Walbridge, *The Wisdom of the Mystic East: Suhrawardī and Platonic Orientalism* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2001), pp. 48–49.

[145] Ibid., p. 63.

[146] *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 463, p. 350.

[147] Ibid.

his departure from the anti-philosophy stance of Abū Ḥāmid Ghazzālī. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt is approaching the visionary philosopher as one who is in immediate contact with the truth that is disclosed to him at the highest stage of reason, which borders the terrain of visionary insight. He turns to the reader and asks: "Do you hear well what is being said? Oh, you philosopher, what do you say? Are these words not the words of philosophy? Whatever is not like these words of philosophy, is entirely vain and void."[148]

ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's praise for the visionary philosopher is in accord with Suhrawardī who founded his philosophy of Illumination on the basis of the Platonic visionary perception of the Ideas. Plato's teachings on the condition of the soul in this world and the liberating qualities of death have been studied and discussed through the centuries. In the dialogues, Plato provides lively descriptions of Socrates in the meditative state as he departs this world and joins the realm of Ideas. In the *Symposium*, for instance, Socrates is shown in a state of trance that lasts a day and a night. Suhrawardī's *magnum opus*, *Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq* (The Philosophy of Illumination), refers to Plato in the context of his discussion on death and self-identification with the divine. Suhrawardī explains:[149]

> The most exalted angel is the angel of death. It sheds the managing light from the darkness. Even though, the light is not devoid of the remainder of the relation with the body, it emerges into the world of light and becomes suspended among the Controlling Lights. The suspended light sees all of the illuminated veils in their relation to the majesty of the Encompassing, the Self-Constituted—the Light of lights that appears translucent. At this point it seems as though it has become a subject within the Encompassing Light. This is an exalted station. Plato talks about it in relation to his soul as does Hermes, and other great philosophers also, based on their inner experience. And this is what the author of this religion [Muḥammad], and a company of those who leave the body from the realm of *Nāsūt* [the world of bodily manifestation] have spoken of. All layers of the spheres are brimming with these affairs and all things are proportionate before It. To It belongs the revealing of the unseen world, known to no other but It. Whoever has not observed these stations in his self must not object to the pillars of philosophy. For, doing so is imperfection, ignorance, and falsehood. Whoever serves God with sincerity and dies transcending the darkness,

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[148] Ibid., sec. 464, p. 350.

[149] Muḥammad S. Shahrazūrī, *Sharḥ-i Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq*, edited by Hossein Ziai (Tehran: Pajhūhishgāh, 1993), sec. 274, p. 588.

> and casts off the senses of darkness, he sees what no one other than He sees.

The mystic is resolved on death because it is through death that we separate from the dark and dense world of matter and realize our innate identity as light. More of a Platonist than a Muslim, Suhrawardī compares Plato with the Prophet Muḥammad, who left the body and the world of bodily manifestations and observed spiritual realities. The visionaries to whom Suhrawardī is referring were able to leave their bodies while they were alive and were able to see the creation as a spectrum of lights and emanations. The culmination of this experience was to acquire knowledge of the truth, which was ultimately found within the self. Ziai analyzes this subject in the context of the dream-vision that Suhrawardī has with Aristotle.

> Aristotle, the "master of philosophy" and "one who comes to the aid of souls", appears to Suhrawardī, who asks a question concerning knowledge (*masʾalat al-ʿilm*), how it is obtained, what it is made of and how it is recognized. Aristotle's response is: "return to your soul (or self)." Self-knowledge is a fundamental component of the Illuminationist theory of knowledge. Knowledge as perception (*idrāk*) of the soul is essential and self-constituted, because an individual is cognizant of his essence by means of that essence itself. Self-consciousness and the concept of "I"—the self-as-self, or its ipseity, its selfhood—are the grounds of knowledge. What is ultimately gained through the initial consciousness of one's essence is a way to knowledge, called the "science based on presence and vision" (*al-ʿilm al-ḥuḍūrī al-shuhūdī*). For Suhrawardī, this is a higher type of knowledge than that obtained by the Peripatetic philosophers, who rely on union with the Active Intellect.[150]

The departure from the confines of the body through mystical death, enables the wayfarer to see the unseen as an interplay of lights. A few decades earlier than Suhrawardī, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt provides an epistemology of lights to describe life in its varied dimensions. He explains that he had acquired these insights through mystical death. This esoteric kind of knowledge is the inspiration for the defense that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, a Muslim mystic, and Socrates, a Greek philosopher, present to the authorities and the judges in charge of their

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[150] Hossein Ziai, "Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī: Founder of the Illuminationist School," in *History of Islamic Philosophy*, edited by Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 453–54.

imprisonment. In the following, I will review Plato's trilogy on death where it concerns similar subjects in ʿAyn al-Quḍāt.

## *Socrates on the Way of Death*

Socrates uses his defense at the Athenian court as an occasion to discuss the true nature of the soul and its exile in the world of matter. He identifies himself as a philosopher and a "practitioner of death" whose primary concerns in the trial include his individual identity, the credibility of the opponents' rhetoric, and the opinion of the audience/jury in relation to truth.[151] Socrates defeats the court's ruling by declaring himself a lover of wisdom whose faith and destiny have always guided him in his practice of death/philosophy.[152] Alan Segal's observation is sound when he explains that for Socrates the life of the philosopher consists of seeking after death in order to separate the soul from the body. He explains: "Death, therefore, is part of the goal of philosophy because it removes us from the biggest source of distraction to the philosophical enterprise."[153] The distraction that Socratres is referring to is the body, which keeps the soul isolated from itself in the darkness of ignorance.

The texts that focus specifically on the trial and death of Socrates—*Euthyphro*, *Apology*, *Crito*, and *Phaedo*—allude to a realm that is arrived at by means of death or a state of consciousness that is similar to death. The soul yearns for this realm and strives toward it through anamnestic reflection and by experiencing the influence this recollection exerts on the acquisition of learning. K. Guthrie, the famous historian of Greek philosophy, argues that Plato was influenced by Pythagorean doctrines, which supported the view that the soul belongs to the world of eternal forms and has a memory of those forms. He explains:

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[151] Plato, "*Apology*," in *Great Dialogues of Plato*, translated by W.H.D. Rouse, edited by Eric H. Warmington and Philip G. Rouse (New York: Mentor, 1984), p. 423. In the *Apology*, Socrates, who has been accused of impiety and is condemned to death, reflects on his proximity to death and to the citizens of Athens. This is how he distinguishes between the rhetorics of his adversaries and the truth.

[152] Ibid, p. 485.

[153] Alan F. Segal, *Life after Death: A History of the Afterlife in Western Religion* (New York: Doubleday, 2004), p. 226.

> It [the soul] has had many earthly lives, and before and between them, when out of the body, has had glimpses of the reality beyond ... The doctrine of Ideas stands or falls together with the belief in the immortality—or at least the pre-existence—of the soul. It explains learning—the acquisition of knowledge in this life—as a process of recollection. The things that we perceive around us could not implant in us for the first time a knowledge of the notions of the universal and the perfect which we believe ourselves to possess. But because we have already had a direct vision of the true realities, it is possible for the feeble and imperfect reflections of them on earth to remind us of what we have once known, but forgotten owing to the soul's contamination with the material dross of the body.[154]

Socrates' identity as an inspired thinker is inseparable from the philosophic discourse whose approach to existence derives from the vantage point of death.[155] Philosophy for Socrates is not an abstract structure in the heavens, detached and removed from this life; nor is death to him a mystery. In fact, he leaves the court advising the judges to keep "good hopes toward death," since the virtuous man need not worry about what befalls him either in this world of shadows or in the realm of true Beings.[156] Death frees the soul from the body and allows it entrance into the realm of Ideas. The philosopher is so preoccupied with the question of death and enlightenment through death that he sees himself more dead than "alive." This is an issue that Socrates turns to in *Phaedo*,[157] where, in his private discussion with his circle of friends, he draws a detailed picture of the house of Hades, its geography, and the fate of the souls.[158] These intimations testify that Socrates has taken part in divine visions and has succeeded in remembering them in his corporeal existence. He has passed through the cycle of death and rebirth many times and retains those remembrances. Consequently, the philosopher has developed an acute sensitivity to death whence he has come and to which he shall return. This is how the *Apology* is not concerned with saving the philosopher from harm and banishment.

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[154] W.K.C. Guthrie, *The Greek Philosophers From Thales to Aristotle* (New York: Harper Torch Books, 1975), p. 95.

[155] Plato, "*Euthyphro*," *The Last Days of Socrates*, translated by Hugh Tredennick (London: Penguin Classics, 1979), p. 20. The issue under consideration is how Socrates defines faith and how his convictions are perceived as heterodoxy. This dialogue sets the stage for the following works on the trial and death of Socrates, *Apology*, *Crito*, and *Phaedo*.

[156] "*Apology*," *Great Dialogues of Plato*, p. 446.

[157] Segal, *Life after Death*, p. 225.

[158] "*Phaedo*," *Great Dialogues of Plato*, pp. 512–18.

Rather it concerns the truth (*al-ḥaqq*) that he has attained in special realms of consciousness. Moreover, it concerns his right to think thoughts that are inspired by death—unwelcome as they may be for the state and its authorities. The crux of the argument in the *Apology* and in the trilogy on death, is in accord with what Massignon calls the classical goals of Hellenistic philosophy: "The purification of the soul through knowledge of the truth, and the formula for the political balance of the ideal state."[159] Plato asserts that the philosopher exists in this world to profess while still alive the knowledge that he attains through death. This teaching resonates with that of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt who discusses the praxis of death as the cornerstone of his mystical views. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and Plato attest a knowledge beyond death that is considered provocative and offensive by the authorities in charge of the political and the intellectual state. Plato is accused of heresy and corrupting the youth with his inquisitive chatter, and ʿAyn al-Quḍāt is branded as eccentric and heretical. They both triumph by remaining steadfast to the visions of the spiritual realms that they have visited through death.

### *Avicenna's Escape from the Prison of the Body*

It is most likely that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's familiarity with Plato was indirect and through the writings of Ghazzālī and Avicenna. Whereas Ghazzālī's scrutiny into philosophy with the intent of refuting it was so profound that some of his readers mistook him as a philosopher, Avicenna's knowledge of Greek philosophy and logic was an essential element of his legacy. Avicenna's work was studied by both the followers of Aristotle, the Peripatetics, and the mystic scholars and the Illuminationist philosophers who interpreted his work as visionary philosophy. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's reference to Avicenna, discussed in detail in the Conclusion, indicates that he had studied the text of the *Aḍḥawiya*, which perceived the hereafter (*maʿād)* beyond the conventional category of resurrection and defined it as a place where one has come from and will return to.[160] The *Aḍḥawiya* is organized into seven chapters that analyze different views on eschatology and the

[159] Louis Massignon, *The Passion of al-Hallāj: Mystic and Martyr of Islam*, vol. 1, translated by Herbert Mason (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 197.

[160] Avicenna, *Risālat al-Aḍḥawiya fī Amr al-Maʿād*, 1st ed., edited by Sulaymān Dunyā (Egypt: Dār al-Fikr al-ʿArabī, 1949), p. 36; henceforth cited as *Aḍḥawiya*.

undying *ipseity* of humankind. Avicenna describes the states of different ranks of men after death and the realization of the second creation. He uses this outline to demonstrate that *maʿād* is a transition from one state of being into another and not a summoning of the dead on a designated day to stand judgement.

ʿAyn al-Quḍāt explains the source of these views to have been Avicenna's perception of the celestial emanations. He considers these insights beyond the understanding of reason and explains that Avicenna cannot be conveniently described under the categorical definition of "philosopher." The eschatology that is discussed in the *Aḍḥawiya* is founded on visions that defy the boundaries of rational comprehension. These kinds of insights upset the understandings of conventional faith to the degree that the one who claims them is branded as heretical and insane.[161]

> But I am saying that Shaykh Abū Saʿīd had not yet tasted these words. If he had experienced them, just as Avicenna and others who were scorned by the strangers had, he also would have been taunted and humiliated in public. May the one who claims such an understanding die a hundred thousand times for that person who has so rent the veils and pointed to the direction-less path! My inner self, at this point, quotes these verses to me. It says, "Reinforce and translate the meaning of Avicenna's condemnation." Hearken:
>
> On the path of love, unbelief and heresy (*tarsāʾī)* are better
> In the vicinity of your tavern, infamy is better;
> Wearing the *zunnār* instead of the habit of unity, is better
> Insanity, insanity, insanity, is better.

ʿAyn al-Quḍāt praised Avicenna for his understanding of mystical concepts and justified his use of metaphor and ambiguous terminology in conveying their meanings. For instance, in the *Tamhīdāt* ʿAyn al-Quḍāt refers to Avicenna in the context of the discussion of the reality of the heart and the spirit.[162] He remarks that Avicenna's use of the term "eternal" as an attribute of the four elements (earth, wind, water, fire) is perplexing to the uninitiated because Avicenna was not referring to the corruptible elements of the terrestrial world but was alluding to the eternal elements of the world of the spirit. The latter are the archetypes that we perceive in the terrestrial world as perishable material forms. Although it is impossible to translate such realities

[161] *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 464, pp. 349–50.
[162] Ibid., sec. 223, p. 167.

into language, we can approach them through symbols, metaphors, and allegories. For instance, the four elements of the terrestrial realm serve as symbols for the elements in a reality that is eternal. Avicenna borrows terrestrial images in order to communicate the abstract forms that belong in the celestial spheres. A similar analogy is at work in the *Shakwā al-Gharīb* where allusions to Hamadhān and its plains serve as metaphors for the plains of the celestial homeland. Although Avicenna's discussions stand for his unique interpretation of the cosmos and the scheme of the creation in relation to the active Intellect, his views are significant in understanding the background to ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's discussions.

Similar to *Shakwā al-Gharīb*, Avicenna's prison treatise the *Recital of Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* elaborates the exile of the soul from the homeland. Avicenna, unlike Plato and ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, does not employ a first-person autobiographical narrative voice; however, his narrative is ultimately autobiographical in the sense that it conveys the quintessence of his philosophy and cosmogony. Corbin explains that in his mystical trilogy, *Recital of Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān*, *Recital of the Bird*, and *Recital of Salāmān and Absāl*, Avicenna depicts himself in the cosmos that he had discussed in his scientific and philosophical works: "By substituting a dramaturgy for cosmology, the recitals guarantee the genuineness of this universe; it is veritably the place of a personally lived adventure."[163]

Avicenna composed the *Recital of Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* during his incarceration in Hamadhān[164] where he was arrested and imprisoned in A.D. 1023 on the charge of treason against the new Būyid prince, Samāʾ al-Dawla.[165] He was imprisoned for establishing contact with the ruler of Iṣfahān, ʿAlāʾ al-Dawla, an enemy to the Būyids. He spent four months in the Fardajān fortress and was released by ʿAlāʾ al-Dawla when the latter attacked Hamadhān. Shortly after his release, Avicenna fled Hamadhān in the company of his brother, two male servants, and his student/biographer and faithful friend Abū ʿUbayd ʿAbdal-Wāḥid Jūzjānī. They fled the city disguised as sufis to join the court of ʿAlāʾ al-Dawla in Iṣfahān as the protégés of the prince. Corbin explains that

[163] Henry Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, translated by Willard R. Trask, Bollingen Series 66 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1960), p. 4.

[164] Avicenna, *The Life of Ibn Sina: A Critical Edition and Annotated Translation*, translated by William E. Gohlman (New York: State University of New York Press, 1974), pp. 58–61.

[165] Avicenna had enjoyed great repute in Hamadhān as the court physician and the vizir to Shams al-Dawla, the Būyid ruler of the city and the father of the new prince.

the Persian translation of *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* was commissioned by ʿAlāʾ al-Dawla and was completed during the life of Avicenna or within five years of his death. The unknown author of this translation is probably Jūzjānī. The translation includes a commentary on the original text, and it is likely that the commentary is based on Avicenna's direct discussions with his students.[166] In his analysis of *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān*, Corbin relies on this commentary as a valuable primary source.

The *Recital of Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* is an edifying discussion on the nature of the universe. It is a discussion on metaphysics and the ten Intelligences, which govern the spheres beyond the terrestrial. Avicenna describes the Intelligences, their emanations, and the state of the soul in relation to them. The genesis of the soul and the ninth Intelligence is the tenth Intelligence or the active Intelligence. The latter is emanated directly from the First Being or the First Principle (*al-Mubdaʿ al-Awwal*). The ten Intelligences constitute a spectrum of lights whose totality is separate from the First Being and the emanations that are in closer proximity to God. Avicenna describes the Intelligences as a hierarchy of emanations that each produce and originate the next Intelligence. In this manner, the Intelligences are separate one from the other and are also linked as metaphysical lights with different degrees of luminosity. Each Intelligence manifests this hierarchy according to its own position in proximity to the tenth Intelligence. And each expresses this relationship in the form that it assumes. The latter is manifested in the metaphysical geography and the inhabitants of the clime that the Intelligence represents. The human soul occupies an exalted place in this pleroma because it emanates from the tenth Intelligence.[167] Therefore, the human soul has a kinship and an innate affinity with the principal emanation of this cosmos. This relationship is comparable to that of a child and its father. The child longs to return to the homeland but is lost and confused in the murky world of matter. Through the *Recital of Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* the soul descries the worlds between the terrestrial sphere and the homeland and provides a roadmap for the return journey.

The soul's return to the homeland begins with its separation from the body and continues with its journey through the spheres of the Intelligences toward the Orient. Accordingly, "orientation" and "self-

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[166] Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, p. 129. Corbin mentions the three Arabic commentatires on the text. Ibid., pp. 127–28.

[167] Ibid., p. 46.

knowledge" are integral themes in the recital. Avicenna's Orient is a non-corporeal destination that transcends spatial and temporal dimensions. The Orient is an epiphany in which the soul sees itself as an emanation of the active Intelligence. In order to arrive there, initially, the soul needs to know itself in isolation from the body and the senses. Then it needs to learn about the other Intelligences and their climes that it will cross on its way home toward the active Intelligence whence it has come. Each Intelligence has its own sphere, which it governs. These domains constitute the stages that lead the human soul back to the homeland and beyond that toward the First Being. The metaphysical geography of these worlds is drawn in the discussion between the two main characters in the recital: the guide, Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān, after whom the recital is named, and the narrator. The latter is the first-person narrator who could be viewed as the author, Avicenna himself. The two hold a dialogue of teacher and disciple as would Avicenna and his students. Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān, the harbinger and the guide from the realm of the tenth Intelligence, meets the narrator and informs him about the unseen realms that constitute the journey. The narrator, acting as the intermediary between the guide and the reader, relates Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān's teachings to us. Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān (Living, Son of Wakeful), as his name suggests, has the vivacity and beauty of youth at the same time while displaying gravity that accompanies old age. He has an ageless beauty and a wisdom that comes with experience. These characteristics are manifest in his external appearance and demeanor as well as in his intellectual vigor and sagacity. In the Avicennan cosmogony, Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān represents the active Intelligence. Goichon explains:

> The name given to the work is then easily explained. *Ḥayy b. Yaḳẓān* is the proper name of the active Intellect; "Living", since Ibn Sīnā places perfection in life in intelligence and action, "son of the Wakeful One", because he emanates from the penultimate pure Intelligence which knows neither sleep nor inattention. The active Intellect is also, through knowledge surpassing the perceptible world, the soul's guide toward its prime Principle, the Being that shines forth over all others.[168]

Corbin defines Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān as the guide and the representative from the active Intelligence. He has direct knowledge of the worlds that unfold beyond the terrestrial realm, because he comes from the

[168] A.M. Goichon,"Ḥayy b. Yaḳẓān," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition. Brill Online. University of Washington–LIBRARIES. August 30, 2007.

land of the Father. He explains that his father, the active Intelligence, has taught him all kinds of knowledge and has shown him how to travel throughout the universe. Subsequently, he has acquired a comprehensive knowledge of the universe.[169]

Goichon aptly summarizes the knowledge under discussion as the Avicennan theory of forms according to which the fabric of the universe is composed of the material and the intelligible forms. The forms are lights that in the terrestrial world are mixed with matter. In the case of intelligible forms there are degrees in the purity of the forms because their lights can be mixed with the celestial matter. Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān's discussion on the sphere of celestial matter, for instance, explains that it is similar to the terrestrial clime in receiving its light through emanation from a higher plain and in being populated by "strangers" who have come there from distant places.[170] These strangers, similar to human souls, must find their way back to the source. However, the difference between the matter of the terrestrial world and that of the celestial sphere is that terrestrial forms, or souls, are separable from their matter, or bodies, whereas the forms of the heavens are not separable from their celestial matter.[171] The knowledge of the forms is metaphysical. It can be perceived by those humans whose souls are freed from the body and the confusion that is caused by the faculties and by sense perception.[172]

The Persian commentary on *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* explains that care for the body can preoccupy the soul and divert its attention away from its true purpose. The commentary identifies the irascible faculty, the concupiscent faculty, and the imaginative faculty, as obstacles that hinder the soul from acquiring wisdom and knowledge of God and His angels.[173] The teachings of Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān and his description of the forms that are not visible to the physical eye can be understood by the soul when it is freed from these confines. This can happen in death, during sleep, or in special states of consciousness induced by the wayfarer.

Accordingly, the narrator, and Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān, and the event of their encounter belong in a realm outside time, space, and sensory perception. The meeting with Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān is an event that can

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[169] Henry Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, p. 138.
[170] Ibid., p. 143.
[171] Ibid., p. 334.
[172] Goichon,"Ḥayy b. Yaḳẓān," Brill Online.
[173] Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, p. 285.

take place in an extraordinary environment. The meeting is the overture to the story as follows:

> The Master Says: "Once when I had taken up residence in my city, I chanced to go out with my companions to one of the pleasure places that lie about the same city. Now, as we were coming and going, making a circle, suddenly in the distance appeared a Sage. He was beautiful; his person shone with a divine glory. Certainly he had tasted of years; long duration had passed over him. Yet there was seen in him only the freshness proper to young men; no weakness bowed his bearing; no fault injured the grace of his stature. In short, no sign of old age was to be found in him, save the imposing gravity of old Sages."[174]

Corbin, relying on the Persian commentary of the original Arabic text, explains that the narrator represents the soul that is freed from the body, while the companions whom he identifies as his friends are the faculties of the sensory perception. These companions, his anxieties, fears, passions, and lusts, do not exercise any power over him, nor do they divert his attention from his pursuit of wisdom, because he has tamed and befriended these unruly consorts and is now taking them along to the "pleasure places about the city." In the same vein, the city and the pleasure places are states of consciousness, which Corbin interprets as the natural dwelling of the soul after it has escaped the body and the dominion of the senses. When the narrator says that he took residence in his city, he means he was able to detach his soul from the prison of the body. This state of detachment from the body is being at home in the citadel of his natural habitat.[175] The soul then goes on an excursion to the pleasure places or to the places where it meditates and seeks a higher manifestation of knowledge.[176] As a result, he meets Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān, whose teachings direct him toward the homeland or the Orient of celestial lights as his next destination. The Orient is the realm of pure forms of light, in contrast to the Occident, whose limits are the realm of pure matter.[177] The recital ends with Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān inviting the narrator to join him on the journey to the homeland and even past that station. He explains:

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[174] Ibid., pp. 284–85.
[175] Ibid., p. 283.
[176] Ibid., p. 286.
[177] Ibid., p. 44.

> "Sometimes certain solitaries among men emigrate toward Him. So much sweetness does He give them to experience that they bow under the weight of His graces. He makes them conscious of the wretchedness of the advantages of your terrestrial clime. And when they return from His palace, they return laden with mystical gifts."
>
> Then the sage Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān said to me: "Were it not that in conversing with thee I approach that King by the very fact that I incite thy awakening, I should have to perform duties toward Him that would take me from thee. Now, if thou wilt, follow me, come with me toward Him. Peace."[178]

According to the Avicennan cosmogony, the Father is the Intelligence that emanates the human souls. He is the source but not the ultimate destination. Therefore, Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān's invitation at the end of the recital points to the homeland as the next stage of an endless journey. The invitation by Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān confirms that gnosis is a personal praxis and a mode of perception that is incommunicable through discursive reasoning. In fact, Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān explains that speaking about these subjects with the narrator has made him eager to take his leave and resume his travels. He explains that there are other "solitaries" like the narrator who can go on the journey. The solitaries of his discussion are those human beings whose souls are capable of receiving gnosis. These persons know how to separate their souls from their bodies in order to arrive at a state of mystical death. When they are in this state, they resemble the adept of the Recital who finds himself "at home in his city." This is the juncture at which the solitaries would meet a guide like Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān who takes them on to the next stage. The journey that they initiate brings them gnosis (*maʿrifa*) or divine wisdom. They return to their bodies with perfect Knowledge of the modes of being of this and the other worlds: "They are among the Delivered."[179]

[178] Ibid., p. 150.
[179] Ibid., p. 377.

## *At Home in the Unseen*

The *Tamhīdāt* mentions ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's encounters with his invisible guides who take him deeper into the unseen. Sometimes this happens with hesitation on their part because they deem him unprepared for advancing with the journey.[180]

> Alas, in this heavenly garden I described, this wretch was held for a month—so that people thought me dead. Then with utter reluctance they sent me to a different station where I stayed for yet more time.

The appearance of the divine guides to the mystics and the prophets is a subject that is discussed in all spiritual traditions. Islam enjoys a rich heritage in this regard. The *Qurʾān* speaks about the Prophet and a divine guide who first appears to him in the Cave of Ḥirāʾ and calls him to prophethood as follows:

> 30–The Chosen One was in the Cave of Ḥirāʾ. For two years and more he had prayed there and adored his Creator and wondered at the mystery of man with his corruptible flesh, just growing out of a clot and the soul in him reaching out to knowledge sublime, new and ever new, taught by the bounty of Allah, and leading to that which man himself knoweth not. And now, behold! A dazzling vision of beauty and light overpowered his senses, and he heard the word "*Iqraʾ*!"
>
> 31–"*Iqraʾ*!" which being interpreted may mean "Read!" or "Proclaim!" or "Recite!" The unlettered Prophet was puzzled; he could not read. The Angel seemed to press him to his breast in a close embrace, and cry rang clear "*Iqraʾ*!" And so it happened three times; until the first overpowering sensation yielded to a collected grasp of the words which made clear his Mission; its Author, Allah, the Creator, its subject, Man, Allah's wondrous handiwork, capable, by Grace, of rising to heights sublime; and the instrument of that mission, the sanctified Pen, and the sanctified Book, the Gift of Allah, which men might read, or write, or study, or treasure in their souls.
>
> 32–The veil was lifted from the Chosen One's eyes, and his soul for a moment was filled with divine ecstasy ... When this passed, and he returned to the world of Time, and Circumstance and this world of Sense, he felt like one whose eyes had seen a light of dazzling beauty, and felt dazed on his return to common sights. The darkness now seemed tenfold dark; the solitude seemed tenfold empty; the mount of Ḥirāʾ, henceforth known as the Mount of Light, the mere shell of an intense memory. Was it a dream? Terror seized his limbs and he

[180] *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 301, pp. 231–32.

> straightway sought her who shared his inmost life, and told her of his sense of exaltation, and the awful void when the curtain closed.[181]

Meeting the guide takes place in a durationless instant in a universe that opens before the seeker. Time and space loose their grip on his senses, his eyes gain a new vision, and he experiences a kind of knowledge and a kind of pleasure that were previously unforeseen. He is given a knowledge that he cannot describe in ordinary terms. The transformative qualities of this knowledge defy the rules of science and justify miraculous deeds. And when he comes back, the unbearable darkness of the world of matter makes him more aware of his alienation from it. The Prophet is so shaken by this experience that for a moment he becomes fully cognizant of his human vulnerabilities and seeks refuge from both worlds in the embrace of his beloved wife.

The divine messenger, commonly identified as the angel Gabriel, reappears a few more times in the *Qurʾān*. In *al-Takwīr* (The Folding Up), an early Meccan revelation that appears in the writings of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, the Prophet is seen in the company of the angel.[182] Their meeting takes place against the background of the *sūra* which describes the collapse of the world as we know it, the individual responsibility of each soul for its own growth, the revelation as spiritual guidance toward this end, and the validity of the Prophet's message through the attestation of the divine messenger.[183] The *sūra* explains that the revelation is conveyed to the Prophet not by evil spirits but through a divine messenger about whom it says "Without doubt he saw him in the clear horizon."[184] *Al-Najm* (The Star), another instance, reaffirms the truth of the Prophet's teachings through his divine guide. The angel Gabriel is said to have appeared to him in might and majesty, on the highest reaches of the horizon when "He approached and came closer; / And was a distance of about two bow-lengths or (even) nearer; / So did (Allah) convey the inspiration to His Servant—(Conveyed) what He (meant) to Convey."[185]

These Qurʾānic references and the account of the nocturnal ascension of the Prophet to heaven, are at the heart of the Islamic mystical discussions concerning altered realms of being. The meeting

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[181] *Qurʾān*, translated by ʿAbdullah Yūsuf ʿAlī, sec. 29–31, pp. 8–9.
[182] Ibid., 81: 23.
[183] Ibid., p. 1605.
[184] Ibid., 81:23.
[185] Ibid., 53: 8–10.

with the divine guide betokens a state of consciousness where the wayfarer is in another reality—in *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān*, Avicenna describes this state as the pleasure places outside the city. The meeting provides insight on the soul and its capacities for acquiring knowledge of God. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's discussion on the reality of the soul and its journey toward the homeland aspires to the Islamic mystical and philosophical tradition but it does not abide by the Avicennan hierarchy of the Intelligences and the emanations that gravitate toward the active Intelligence. According to ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, a non-personal God is equally close to all of the creatures and His emanations are equally available to all.[186] We are the ones who determine our proximity to this God. He justifies the shortcoming in the Avicennan model by explaining that the creation seems hierarchical to us because our human perspective is informed by the spatial and the temporal categories of meaning and is thus subjected to our processes of cognition through rational reasoning. The consciousness of this altered reality is so unfamiliar to us that we inevitably revert to our limited understanding in comprehending it. Avicenna is an exceptional philosopher because he takes his visionary insights to the furthest limits of rational reasoning as is expressed in the hierarchy of emanations. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt further explains that regardless of our human constraints, the omnipresent knowledge of God permeates through all of the creation on an equal basis. God has created thousands upon thousands of non-corporeal worlds. These worlds are so numerous that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt asks himself why did God create our world, which bears the inhibitions of matter.[187] The soul is from the immaterial realm of God's command. That is the realm of *kūn* (be). The soul is created, but not subjected to the spatial and temporal dimensions of meaning. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt explains that the man who greets his soul is aware that he is in this world on his own accord. This notwithstanding, he is homesick for his origins where he longs to return.[188]

> Indeed I cry because of my exile:
> The eyes of the stranger always cry,
> The day I left my land
> I was wrong

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[186] *Zubdat al-Ḥaqāʾiq*, sec. 15, pp. 23–24.
[187] *Maktūbāt*, vol. 1, sec. 120, p. 88.
[188] *Maktūbāt*, "Letter 98," sec. 561.

> I wonder why I left
> My homeland where my love is
>
> O friend! I cannot talk about how this forced separation is the consequence of my voluntary departure. Can you hear [what I am telling you]?
>
> The one who is cast away from Him is but His kin:
> The one who leaves the land where his beloved is.

The voluntary departure of the soul is motivated by its desire to know God through the creation. This desire finds its genesis in God's intention for manifesting the creation. According to a famous *hadīth qudsī*, God told the prophet David that He was a hidden treasure and produced the creation in order to be known through His creation. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt says, the desire to know and to be known is at the root of the creation and involves both God and man.[189]

The journey of the soul takes place against this background. The soul departs from its homeland, the realm of God's command, and comes into this world in order to know God in the material world where the passions reign. During the course of its journey, the soul matures through its dealings with these forces and accosts a higher level of gnosis. The *Tamhīdāt* explains that the soul is here on behalf of God in order to cast a metaphoric glance on the body and the material creation.[190] The soul sees the creation as a manifestation of God's attributes and observes the creation as a metaphor for the reality of God. Itself part of this creation, the soul's mode of perception is distinct from the reality of seeing. The latter can only occur through the perspective of God. In regards to the wayfarer, this mode of perception can be experienced at the junctures when the adept and the path merge with each other at different stages of the journey. These activities comprise the substance of a dramatic, arduous, and wondrous journey.

The imprisonment of the soul in the body and its eventual escape and enlightenment are discussed in the teachings of Plato, Avicenna, and ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, all of whom use metaphorical language in describing special realms of consciousness where the soul connects to other dimensions of reality. An important issue that our authors leave unclear is how the soul separates from the body and initiates its

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[189] *Zubdat al-Ḥaqāʾiq*, p. 19.
[190] *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 219, pp. 163–64.

subsequent progress into the unseen. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt refers to this crucial juncture using the word "event." He relates the term as the instance when the inner sight is opened and mystical death takes place. Plato occasionally portrays Socrates in a state of trance, contemplating the Ideas in his inspiring solitude. Suhrawardī, as discussed earlier, relates this habit of Socrates to a stage of death. Avicenna omits any discussion of the issue in the *Recital of Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān*, although he refers to it in the *Recital of the Bird* and the *Recital of Salāmān and Absāl*. In the *Recital of Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān*, Avicenna begins the narrative after the soul has departed from the body and is ready to meet the guide in the pleasure places around the city and brings the discussion to an end with Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān's invitation to the adept to follow him to the homeland. In this manner, the plot of the recital evades any discussion on how the soul has arrived at the place where it meets Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān. This void gives rise to an interesting discussion by Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī who composes *Qiṣṣat al-Ghurba al-Gharbīya* (The Tale of the Occidental Exile) in response.[191]

## Suhrawardī, *Tale of the Occidental Exile*

*Qiṣṣat al-Ghurba al-Gharbīya* is an allegory for the descent of the soul into the world of matter and its departure from this realm. The exile of the story is the narrator/protagonist who describes his voluntary departure from the spiritual realm. He explains that he and his brother left their homeland in the Orient, Transoxania, seeking a flock of birds at the shore of the fathomless, green ocean (*sāḥil al-lujja al-khaḍrāʾ*). This sea is located in the Occident, the Northern Africa of the story. The Persian commentary identifies the narrator as the soul and his brother as the speculative faculty, which stands independent of the body and has an innate understanding of God. The soul and its companion descend from the supernal realm (*ʿālam al-ʿalawī*) in order to visit the world of sense perception and gain gnosis through it. This

[191] Suhrawardī, "*Qiṣṣat al-Ghurba al-Gharbīya*," in Henry Corbin, *Oeuvres Philosophiques et Mystiques de Shihabaddin Yahya Sohrawardi*, (Opera Metaphysica et Mystica 2) (Tehran: Institute Franco-Iranien; Paris: Librairie D'Amerique et D'orient, 1952), pp. 274–97; henceforth cited as Suhrawardī, *Qiṣṣat al-Ghurba al-Gharbīya*. For a parallel Persian-English translation of this treatise see, Suhrawardī, *Suhrawardi, the Philosophical Allegories and Mystical Treatises*, Bibliotheca Iranica, edited and translated by Wheeler M. Thackston (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 1999), pp. 106–24.

experience will prepare them for the next stages of the journey, which is connecting with the acquired intellects (*ʿaql al-malaka wa ʿaql al-mustafād*).

The plight of these travellers is reminiscent of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt who claims responsibility for his decision to leave the homeland and laments his departure as he says.[192] It is significant to note that the travellers in the story of Suhrawardī do not intend to descend into this realm but are acting as visitors. The travellers, planning a brief visitation to the shores of this realm, wish to acquaint themselves with those souls who belong to this shore but are in flight away from it. These bird-like souls are the wayfarers—similar to Socrates, the narrator in the *Recital of Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān*, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt in his flights into the unseen, and Suhrawardī himself—who have separated from the body and are in the stage between matter and spirit. The protagonist in Suhrawardī's tale wants to meet and greet these kinds of souls and to acquire knowledge of sense perception from them. He does not intend to fall into the world of matter but is eventually ensnared by it and soon forgets his true identity. He and his companion become captives at the village of Qayrawān, whose inhabitants are at war with one another.[193] Qayrawān represents the conflicted world of matter whose fabric of existence—earth, wind, water, and fire—is in constant agitation and turmoil. The travelers are held captive by the inhabitants of this foreign land and undergo trials and tribulations. They are imprisoned in the dark dungeon of a tall tower. The dungeon and the tower represent the "dungeon" of the body that is situated in the "tower" of the world. The prison of Suhrawardī's exile is described as the pit of a well that is filled with wave upon wave of darkness. The overwhelming darkness is a metaphor for the blinding darkness of the world of matter that keeps the soul hidden from view. Darkness as such is juxtaposed against the homeland, where the domain of the Father, who is light upon light (*nūrun ʿala nūrin*), is characterized by layers of light illuminating the observer and the observed.

In spite of these impediments, the exiled protagonist succeeds in finding his way back to his homeland. He flees out of the darkness through a small opening at the mouth of the dungeon. This escape opens onto a castle under a beautiful sky. This setting is the portal onto another world where, similar to the city in Avicenna's *Ḥayy ibn*

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[192] *Maktūbāt*, "Letter 98," sec. 561.

[193] *Qurʾān*, 4: 75.

*Yaqẓān*, the protagonist meets his guide. After visiting the castle, Suhrawardī's travelers eventually meet their guide the hoopoe who takes them to the homeland. The travelers can ascend out of the dungeon at night, but in the morning, when awake, they fall back into the well of their captivity. Suhrawardī explains:[194]

> They told us: "There is no harm if you go up to the top of the castle freed from the chain; but at dawn you must fall into the bottom of the pit."[195] And in the depths of the well, there was darkness upon darkness such that if we extended our hands we could not see them.[196] We were submerged in the bottom of the well except in the moments of the evening when we could climb up the castle, looking through the void through a small opening.

This explains that the periodic departures of the soul in the direction of the homeland take place during sleep when the senses are dormant. Sleep is compared to death, which marks the ultimate separation of the soul from the body. The *Qurʾān* attests this in several sūras. *Al-Zumar* (Crowds), for instance, speaks of the mysteries of the return (*muʿād*) to God.[197] It says that God takes the souls of men at the time of death and keeps them from returning to life. As for those whose hour has not arrived yet, God takes their souls during their sleep and sends them back to their bodies for a specific duration of time. During this time, the soul prepares for visions of God as it undertakes its homeward adventures.

The discussion on the separation of the soul from the body and its journey to the homeland is the focus of Suhrawardī's *Qiṣṣat al-Ghurba al-Gharbīya* and the occasion for his reply to Avicenna. A significant moment in the narrative occurs in its opening when Suhrawardī explains that his reason for composing the text is to respond to Avicenna's failure in the *Recital of Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* to develop the concept *al-ṭāmma al-kubrā* (the Great Event) or *al-ṭawr al-aʿẓam* (the Exalted State). The Great Event is an eschatological term referring to the day of judgement and to an apocalyptic state of revelation. *Al-ṭawr al-aʿẓam*, Suhrawardī explains, is the mystery that underlies the stages of mysticism and the quality of those to whom revelations are granted.

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[194] Suhrawardī, *Qiṣṣat al-Ghurba al-Gharbīya*, pp. 278–79.
[195] *Qurʾān*, 12: 10, 15.
[196] Ibid., 24: 40.
[197] Ibid., 39: 42.

*Qiṣṣat al-Ghurba al-Gharbīya* attempts to describe this state as the soul separates from the body.[198]

> But when I saw the story of *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* I found it to be devoid of intimations and allusions that refer to the Exalted State[199]—and this, in spite of wonders of spiritual sayings and profound allusions that it contains. The Great Event is treasured in the revealed books and deposited in the symbols of the philosophers. It is hidden in the story of *Salāmān and Absāl* which the author of *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* has composed. And it is a secret upon which are arranged the stages of the gnostics and those to whom revelations are granted. But it was not referred to in the epistle *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* except in the end of the book where it was said: "Sometimes, certain solitaries from mankind immigrated toward Him," to the end of the passage. So I decided to mention something about it, for my brethren, in the form of a story that I have named *The Tale of Occidental Exile*. I beseech God to aid me in what I endeavor.

The *Qurʾān* refers to *al-ṭāmma al-kubrā* as the day when one remembers his deeds and witnesses fear and hope in full view.[200] The apocalypse is the place of memory and action, life and death, where one's being, acts, and thoughts are before one's sight. Heaven and hell set the soul ablaze with memory, and the heart of the mystic reflects his faith. The Doomsday of the wayfarer is a form of self-knowledge that is unveiled in his heart. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt provides elaborate discussions on *al-ṭāmma al-kubrā*, which he calls the "event," and describes as the visionary perception of oneself and the apocalypse. The following chapter will concern itself with ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's discussion of this subject.

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[198] Suhrawardī, *Qiṣṣat al-Ghurba al-Gharbīya*, pp. 275–76.

[199] *Qurʾān*, 79: 34–36.

[200] Ibid.

> Therefore, when there comes / The great, overwhelming (Event) / The Day when Man / Shall remember (all) / That he strove for / And Hell-Fire shall be / Placed in full view / For (all) to see.

CHAPTER THREE

# DEATH AND VISIONS OF THE UNSEEN

In his works ʿAyn al-Quḍāt displays a keen focus on death, which determines his approach to life and mysticism, and distinguishes him as an original thinker. For ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, death is the event that takes us to our humanity. He explains that man is the coming together of the flesh and the light of God.[201] It is in death, when the soul has departed from the body, that the true identity of man, the light inside (*ʾanāʾīyatuhu*) shines on him.[202] In ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, the effect of death (not "dying") calls into question the categorical confidence we place in the rational processes of cognition, reason, and the individual's articulation of the self in relation to faith. In this context, death is not so much a dissolution of the self as a rupture with definitions and an introduction to newer—yet still relative—realms of knowledge. Therefore, death is a process and an activity that shapes the mystic's consciousness and identity. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt considers an exalted death-experience (*mawt-i maʿnawī*) as the path to true consciousness of the One and of self-identity. This death brings the wayfarer in contact with a spectrum of lights. Accordingly, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt explains his acquired knowledge in terms of an epistemology of lights—a detailed analysis of these lights is the subject of the next chapter. The present discussion will focus on death as transcendence in the works of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and other formative authors in his milieu.

## *To Die Like This*

ʿAyn al-Quḍāt reflects on death in various contexts. He sees death as a transition in the life of man and not the termination of his humanity. For him, death is a realm of consciousness that is experienced by the soul. Just as the soul experiences special worldly realms that are called

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[201] He sets forth a detailed analysis of the relationship between death, knowledge, and identity in his major works, *Tamhīdāt* and *Zubdat al-Ḥaqāʾiq*.

[202] *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 192, pp. 141–42. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt explains that one carries within himself seventy thousand attributes, which are revealed to the common man through death and to the wayfarer at the appropriate mystical stations.

"being in this world," it enters other special realms, among them, the realms of the tomb, the realms of Doomsday, and others.[203] It is through death that the soul journeys on into these realms. Those mystics who have experienced death while still living in the world of matter go past these realms into unforeseen territories that are beyond thought and imagination and acquire knowledge by proximity to God (*al-ʿilm al-ladunnī*). In a personal letter he describes the extensions of this kind of knowledge as follows:[204]

> Past this is a world (*ʿālam*) wherein one cognition (*idrāk*) incorporates infinite understandings. And each of those understandings is like the cognition of the world of reason that incorporates the branches of knowledge into which finitude has no way. Past this world is another world wherein units (*āḥād*) of apperceptions (*mudrakāt*) incorporate infinite branches of knowledge, such that each one of these units is like the understandings of the world that is past reason. And that is the fourth world of the tangible cognition (*al-idrāk al-ḥissī*)—such as phantasy (*wahm*) and imagination (*khayāl)* which are two of the fine inner faculties (*ḥawass-i baṭin*). We take everything from the first [world] and the intelligibles (*maʿqūlāt*) from the second. And I have arrived at up to four worlds and those understandings are mine. And I have faith through analytical assertion and not intuition, that past this are several thousand worlds beyond human imagination and the understanding of mankind.

It is impossible to imagine the compass of this cognition, let alone to describe it in language and words; but ʿAyn al-Quḍāt embarks on a discursive and speculative analysis by presenting his visions as analytical observations rather than personal ventures. The discussion on color photisms, for instance, delineates the contrasting but complimentary lights of Muḥammad and Satan and leads the reader past the personal details of the visionary journey into the cosmogonic and eschatological significance of these lights. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt relates the cognition of the unseen as a mode of perception that, unlike the perception of the sensory realm of experience, does not adhere to the relationship between the knowing, appropriating subject and the signified object of his perception. The onlooker is self-conscious of his inability to understand the unseen where visions and events are characterized with paradoxical and symbolic properties. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt

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[203] *Zubdat al-Ḥaqāʾiq*, p. 79.
[204] *Maktūbāt*, vol. 1, letter 25, sec. 347–48, pp. 215–16.

communicates this abstraction in his writing even when he is giving detail.

He considers his writing as the medium for the analytical assertion of the unseen. His writing, both in the sense of the written works and writing as an activity, depicts and makes apprehensible the realms past death and confirms their coexistence with the temporal now. The opening lines of a personal letter establish the interconnectedness of the writing and the tangible unseen in the present moment of the letter-writing.[205] ʿAyn al-Quḍāt assumes a reportorial tone in order to emphasize the objective reality of the circumstances, both visionary and pragmatic. Therefore, he identifies the location and the date where the letter is being composed. This is not a common practice for him, but in this instance he intends to emphasize the palpability of the terrestrial present at hand. This is juxtaposed against the immediacy of the eternity, which opens before him in the body of the visionary experience. He is writing the letter to his friend Ardshīr at whose house ʿAyn al-Quḍāt is staying while he is away. The date is the evening of the fifteenth day of the month of *Ramaḍān*. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt explains that as he was writing the letter, he entered the canopies of the unseen (*ghayb*) and saw that the inhabitants of that clime were crying the proclamation: "From the opposites learn a lesson, O you man of insight." Furthermore, he sees a solitary man with a pony that is tied to a camel. The man's black hair betokens his sadness and is in sharp contrast to the white color of the pony, which represents healthy life. The camel is a symbol for mankind's intoxication with the love of God. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt interprets this striking vision as an allegory for the saying "the believer is like a camel." This reference is to the *ḥadīth* that compares the believer to a camel that is always drunk with the love of God who looks after His camel: "The believer is like a camel who is easily led wherever he is taken."[206] ʿAyn al-Quḍāt proceeds by relating this *ḥadīth* to the *Qurʾān* when it says "He is the One who has created you / and of you are the unbelievers, and some that are the believers."[207] The rest of the letter expounds the analysis of the imagery in the vision and in the scripture. This vision takes the beholder to the mystery of the creation and the color spectrum of the lights that characterize different shades of people depending on their proximity to the light of

[205] Ibid., sec. 421, p. 253.

[206] Wensinck, A.J., *Concordance et Indices de la Tradition Musulmane*, vol. 1 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1936), p. 372.

[207] *Qurʾān*, 64: 2.

God. Some are enveloped in the hue of blackness, others in whiteness, redness, and some in yellowness. The variety of the colors and the peoples can startle one with fear and apprehension. He then concludes the vision with a verse from the *Qurʾān*: "And among His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the variations in your languages and your colours / verily in that are signs for those who know."[208] ʿAyn al-Quḍāt reiterates that the journey is visionary and not corporeal and identifies different turning points on the path through wine imagery. The wayfarer understands his relationship with himself and his proximity to God as he is intoxicated with glimpses of God. He becomes aware that God does not allow those who still think in terms of "I" and "thou" closer, and the wayfarer will have to learn how to abandon his/her consciousness of the self in order to accost Him.

The heart, which is the intermediary between the world of matter and the spiritual realm, is the gateway that the wayfarer passes through in approaching this other realm. The heart is where the seeker measures his own capacity for receiving the knowledge of the unseen. As the seat of his emotions and the abode of God, the heart signifies man's identity, which is mediated through his passions, his sensory perceptions, his love and disdain for the other creatures, and his love and ignorance of the divine. The wayfarer comes in contact with his heart and with altered modes of consciousness as he attains the highest reaches of reason and approaches the preliminary stages of gnosis (*maʿrifa*).[209] At this stage, he witnesses realities that are incomprehensible by reason. For instance, he perceives that faith and faithlessness are the same. Moreover, he perceives that the knowledge that he thinks he possesses is illusive and does not hold any value even in comparison to the illiterate and the ignorant. That is the case because this knowledge has been based on the realities of the corporeal realm of existence, which are faint manifestations of the attributes of God.[210]

This realization signifies the juncture when reason sees the infinite possibilities of perception and also its own insufficiency in interpreting them. Each seeker comes to grips with this consciousness according to one's aptitude for understanding the limits of reason. One's salvation

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[208] Ibid., 30: 22.
[209] *Zubdat al-Ḥaqāʾiq*, sec. 29, pp. 35–36.
[210] *Maktūbāt*, vol. 1, letter 25, sec. 339–40, pp. 210–11.

from the limitations of one's own humanity and the limitations of rational faculties is to venture (*himma)* to question this acquired knowledge and strive for more at every stage of the path. This is how the wayfarer traverses one realm in the heart and in the unseen and becomes cognizant of the next one. Notwithstanding the intuitive and the supra-rational quality of these perceptions, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt asserts that he can confirm these observations through analytical discourse. He is referring to the analytical and the discursive quality of his scholarly corpus that mainly concerns the nature of prophecy, the esoteric meaning of the *Qurʾān*, the relative nature of religion and faith, and the significance of color and light photisms in defining his cosmogony and eschatology.

The knowledge past reason is a spectrum similar to light; it illuminates what is still not in sight. In his writing, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt conveys this knowledge through the symbolism of light and shadow and good and evil. In personal correspondence he explains how an individual perceives this kind of knowledge.[211]

> O brave man! Just as it is impossible to contain the world of the prophets and the saints in the world of an embryo, thou knowest that the knowledge of the other world fits not in the patience (*ḥawṣalah*) of reason and differentiation (*tamyīz*). And they call this faith of the unseen world (*ghayb*). As the sight of the heart gains light, it knows with certainty that a thing, still afar, awaits one on the path: a thing that he shall arrive at. It is at this station that one comes to distinguish the world wherein there is no limit to the Infinite Units. At this stage, the infinity of the traversed world seems to him confined. I cannot put into words the wonders that are manifest there.

Seeing these wonders is facilitated by the gradual opening of the "inner sight" *(infitāḥ ʿayn al-baṣīra)*. The inner sight receives the illuminations of the unseen to the degree that the wayfarer is able to withstand their intensity. As he grows accustomed to these illuminations, his love for the beauty of the pre-eternal presence grows more intense. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt writes about this subject as he warns the reader that he is using words such as "accustomed" and "love" by necessity because language is inadequate in describing these meanings.[212] He explains that insight (*baṣīrat*) attains pre-eternal truths through intuition (*ḥads*). At this stage, the act of perception as well as the perceived are still mediated. The relationship between insight (*baṣīrat*) and the

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[211] Ibid., sec. 343, p. 213.

[212] *Zubdat al-Ḥaqāʾiq*, sec. 2, p. 30.

obtained truths is established through sense perception (*al-idrāk al-ḥissī*). This understanding involves traversing an infinite distance that has no terminus. Paradoxically, this distance consists of stages whose finitude becomes apparent only when any given stage is mastered by the wayfarer. The knowledge of such finitude is obtained when the inner sight, or vision, "sees" types of truth. Consequently, one realizes there are more objects (non-corporeal as they may be) awaiting on the path.

### *The Reality of Death*

The reality of death is an early unveiling on the path by means of which ʿAyn al-Quḍāt sees death as transcendence. This experience convinces him to refute the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead on the day of judgement, which is anticipated to take place at a specific and punctual juncture in linear time. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's observation is in accord with the views of Avicenna on the subject. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt explains:[213]

> My dear, whoever says that man is merely the body and it will crumble and perish in the grave, and calls the soul an accident and nothing other than that—as is the case with some rationalist theologians (*mutakallimūn*) who say that on the day of judgement God will recreate the body—and whoever considers the resurrection of the dead in this manner, his belief equals heresy. If mankind perished with death, why at the time of his death did Muṣṭafā, peace be upon him, say: "Rather, the ultimate friend, the purest life, and the perfection of completeness" ? And when he said: "The grave is an orchard in the gardens of the paradise or a pit in the voids of the fire." Or when to his daughter, may God be content with her, and she laughed, he said: "Indeed you are going to hasten after me"?[214] Alas, why did Balāl the Abyssinian say at the moment of his death: "Tomorrow we will join the most beloved, Muḥammad and his companions"? Hearken to this meaning whole from God: "Do not account those who die on the path of God dead, rather, they are alive before their Lord." Why did Muṣṭafā, peace be upon him, elsewhere say: "The friends of God do not die but move from one world into another"?

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[213] *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 216, p. 161.

[214] It is noteworthy that "hasten" (*israʿ*), which is derived from the root *s-r-ʿ*, resonates the causative form of the verb meaning "to make haste" (*isrāʿ*). This word in the oldest interpretations of the ascension (*miʿrāj*) was used to refer to his nocturnal journey to heaven. The angel Gabriel appeared to the Prophet and told him to make haste for the journey is at hand. Here, death is made analogous with the ascension.

In his discussion of death, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt makes a distinction between the death of the body and the death of the heart. The body inevitably disintegrates, but the heart is the humanity (*basharīya*) of man, which transcends corporeal time and space and survives death. If we understand the corporeal frame to be the heart, then we are mistaken, for the heart does not die, because it reflects the image of God or the light that He bestowed on man at the time of the creation:[215] The heart is the mirror in which the affections and the altercations between the lover and the beloved are reflected.[216] These exchanges lead to the gradual opening of the "inner sight" (*infitāḥ ʿayn al-baṣīra*) and the coming to light of one's identity. This process occurs through death, when the heart is freed from the body and ready to join the beloved. In this manner, death facilitates the opening of the inner sight and the perception of the unseen (*ghayb*). Death itself becomes apprehensible by means of this process and is assimilated into the unveilings (*mukāshafāt*). Therefore, death is a process of identification and not an absolute and final event. In the *Tamhīdāt* he describes his experience of a "mystical death" (*mawt-i maʿnawī*), which brought him in contact with infinite realms of knowledge.[217] In one instance he says:[218]

> O friend, that world is all life upon life; and this world is all death entwined with death. Unless you pass through death you will not reach life: "But verily the Home in the Hearafter—that is life."[219] In another place He [God through Jesus] says: "He who was not born twice will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven."[220] He says: the wayfarer must be born twice. He should once be born through his mother, so that he can see himself and this perishing world. And he should once be born of himself, so that he can see God and that everlasting world. If you want to hear this more completely, listen to how God informs of a people who say: Our Lord! Twice hast Thou made us without life, and twice hast Thou given us life![221] But know that there is a death above the death

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[215] *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 217–19, pp. 162–64.

[216] This situation is analogous with Ghazzālī's observations concerning "love," whereby, the "lover" of God could transcend his own "time" and join with the "beloved" in His realm where a different concept of "time" dawns on the wayfarer.

[217] *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 219, p. 164.

[218] Ibid., sec. 418–20, pp. 319–21.

[219] *Qurʾān*, 29: 64.

[220] John 3: 3: KJV. "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

[221] *Qurʾān*, 40: 11. In a footnote to this verse, Yūsuf ʿAlī, the translator, explains that God created man out of clay when he was dead. Then He brought him to life on this earth. When he dies to this world, he is revived in the other on the Day of Judgement.

> of the body and understand that there is another life aside from the life of the body. If you want to know more about the mystical life and death hear what Muṣṭafā said in his prayers: "O God, I am alive through you and die through you." He says: God, I am alive through you and die through you. Do you at all understand what living and dying through him is?
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> Alas, this is a state that is known by those who gaze at the beautiful witness (*shāhid bāzān*) and know how it is to be alive with the witness and what it means to be dead without him. The witness and the witnessed reveal the meaning of life and death to the true *shāhid bāzān*.
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> I realize that these words do not exist in your world of habit. The world of habit is that of the [Islamic] law, and abiding by the law is abiding by habitude. Unless you give up habitude and abandon it, you cannot traverse the truth. If you can dare, give in to these verses and see what they say:
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> Alas, this law is the religion of recklessness
> Our religion is heresy and *zandaqa*
> Faith and faithlessness are the face of that ravishing idol
> Faith and faithlessness on our path are both unity
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> Death is separation and life is meeting and rapture. What can be said about the union? Alas "There is no knowing except by seeing;" how can one who is not ensnared by love and by the witness know of this? If you want to know this more clearly, for us death is heresy and life is Islam and unity.
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> "On the night of the ascension I saw my lord as a young man." My friend, this is but the vision and the states of the teacher with the disciple. "Pay heed, the beardless youth has a complexion like that of God" is how the teacher trains the disciple and how he alarms him about this station of witnessing. As I said, *shāhid bāzān* know this death and life. To them, death is separation and exile, and life is meeting and ecstasy. What can one say about union? I regret "The description is no match for seeing it yourself." What do those who are free from love and gazing upon the witness know!? If you wish to understand this more clearly: for us death is heresy and life is Islam and unitarianism.

Mystical death is a visionary event that can take place during sleep or through spiritual wayfaring in wakefulness. It can be initiated through divine interference, as is the case with the Prophet and the angel Gabriel, when the divine guide takes the wayfarer out of his body into the heaven. Or it can be initiated by the wayfarer through his meditations, vigils, and supplications when he opens his heart to the

unseen and calls out to God to allow him closer to His thresholds. In the case of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, his first visions concern the mysteries of the Doomsday and the beauty and majesty of the divine attributes. He experiences the non-corporeal realities that are closer to the emanations of God and consequently feels more alive in this death than he has ever felt in living. He further perceives that dying is an occurrence that also takes place in the unseen as the wayfarer is ready to make a transition from one state of gnosis to the next one away from his self and closer to God.

### *Travelling the Earth and the Sky Looking for the Beloved*

The passage above, from the *Tamhīdāt*, refers to the ascension (*miʿrāj*) of the Prophet who said: "On the night of the ascension I saw my lord as a young man." ʿAyn al-Quḍāt adds: "My friend, this is but the vision and the state of the teacher with the disciple." The ascension, also known as the nocturnal journey (*isrāʾ*), is alluded to in the *Qurʾān* and discussed at length in the Islamic literature concerning this subject.[222] There are two major interpretations of the journey: one sees it as a corporeal passage, the other as a visionary transcendence.[223] The oldest accounts, which are closest to the time of the Prophet, record it as a journey in body and flesh from Mecca to Jerusalem in a brief portion of the night. The journey is described to have been so swift that when the Prophet returned his bed was still warm, and the jar of water by his bedside that had tumbled over at the time of his departure was still dripping water. It is said that the Prophet was sleeping in Mecca when he was wakened by the angel Gabriel, who took him to the holy city mounted on the back of the fabulous beast *Burāq*.[224] There he joined the other prophets of the Abrahamic tradition, Ibrahim, Moses, and

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[222] *Qurʾān*, 17: 1. "Glory to Allah who did take His Servant for a journey by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque, whose precincts We did bless—in order that We might show him some of Our Signs: for He is the one Who heareth and seeth (all things)."

[223] B. Schrieke, J. Horovitz, "Miʿrādj," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition. Brill Online. University of Washington–LIBRARIES. September 18, 2007.

[224] R. Paret, "Al-Burāḳ," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition. Brill Online. University of Washington–LIBRARIES.September 18, 2007. Steingass Dictionary provides the following entry for Burāq: "The celebrated animal smaller than a mule and bigger than an ass, upon which Muhammad is said to have gone from Jerusalem to heaven." Others have described it as a winged beast or horse.

Jesus, whom he led in the ritual Islamic prayer (*ṣalāt*).[225] In some traditions Muḥammad is said to have held a conversation with God during the ascension. The other reading of the ascension sees it as a visionary and incorporeal journey by means of which the Prophet is shown the holy city of Jerusalem. These discussions define the nocturnal journey either as a physical and spatial or a spiritual and visionary crossing.

In her study of the life of the Prophet, Annemarie Schimmel remarks that the durationless instant that is witnessed in the advent of the nocturnal journey is a dominant motif in mystical literature at large. She is discussing the instant (*waqt/ das Nu*) as a mystical state in which the wayfarer traverses huge distances, and lives one or many lives in a manner that is incommensurate to our temporal and spatial dimensions. During his nocturnal journey, the Prophet came in contact with the *nunc aeternum*, which is beyond the "created, serial time."[226] Schimmel explains that for visionary mystics in the tradition of Ibn al-ʿArabī, *waqt* refers to the events of a visionary mode of experience that can be identified as an eternal now as the wayfarer has a glimpse of the pre-eternal consciousness of God. These mystics consider the ascension a visionary experience because God is omnipresent and the notion of physical transport to His abode is too crass to justify the encounter with His ever present eternity.[227] The differences between Ibn al-ʿArabī and ʿAyn al-Quḍāt notwithstanding, the writings of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt support the visionary quality of the passage and identify the passenger to be the soul, not the man in the flesh. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt takes the argument further and compares the pivotal transitions in the unseen, from one realm onto the next, with the experience of living and dying in the corporeal realm. That is why he takes the Prophet as witness and says: "But know that there is a death above the death of the body and understand that there is another life aside from the life of the body. If you want to know more about the mystical life and death hear what Muṣṭafā said in his prayers: 'O God,

[225] This is the journey during which the Prophet is instructed about the requirements for the Muslim ritual prayers. It is significant that in leading the earlier prophets in prayer he is simultaneously exercising a newly learned lesson and practicing his role as the latest and the last Prophet whose mission is to complete the teachings of the others. This mission distinguishes him as the leader among his peers.

[226] Annemarie Schimmel, *And Muhammad is His Messenger: The Veneration of the Prophet in Islamic Piety* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985), p. 161.

[227] Ibid., p. 165.

I am alive through you and die through you.' He says: God, I am alive through you and die through you. Do you at all understand what living and dying through him is?"[228]

With Hujwīrī's (d. 470/1077) account of Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī (d. A.D. 874/78) the term *miʿrāj* (ascension) first entered the mystical lexicon in reference to the mystics who, in the manner of the Prophet, came in contact with the unseen. Citing Hujwīrī's *Kashf al-Maḥjūb li-Arbāb al-Qulūb* (The Unveiling of the Concealed for the People of the Heart), Zaehner explains:

> The kernel of the episode he calls the *miʿrāj* is the saying recorded by Sarrāj in which Abū Yazīd says that he 'became a bird', and after flying through all eternal modes of existence and seeing the tree of Oneness, he realized it was all 'deceit'. ... This is how Hujwīrī's account runs:
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> My inmost soul (*sirr*) was rapt into the heavens, but it looked at nothing [on the way]. Heaven and hell were displayed to it, but it paid no attention to anything; and it was drawn up beyond [all] contingent beings and all that veiled him from its sight. And I became a bird and flew continuously in the atmosphere of [God's] essence (*hūwiyyat*) until I overlooked the broad plain of oneness in which I saw the tree of eternity without beginning. When I looked [upon it all], all of it was I. I said: 'O Lord God, so long as a sense of "I" remains, there is no way from me to thee, nor have I any means of passing beyond the selfhood of self. What shall I do? [Then] the command came [saying]: 'O Abū Yazīd, thou canst not escape from thy consciousness of being a "thou" except by following our beloved; wipe thine eye with the dust of his feet as with a collyrium and never cease to follow after him.
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> This, says Hūjwīrī, is known as the *miʿrāj* of Abū Yazīd.[229]

Abū Yazīd is cited frequently in the writings of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, whose accounts on the transformation of his consciousness are more abstract compared to the personal and picturesque visions of Abū Yazīd and others like Rūzbihān al-Baqlī. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt is one of these falcons who soar to the heavens and see that not only the corporeal world but also the heavens are ultimately illusive because they are manifestations of the attributes of the divine. The wayfarer learns that God's essence is other than the visions that he has experienced so far, which have gauged his awareness of his self in distinction from God. This subject is treated in the discussion on God's essence and attributes, which

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[228] *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 418, pp. 319–20.

[229] R.C. Zaehner, *Hindu and Muslim Mysticism* (London: University of London the Athlonne Press, 1960), pp. 124–25.

ʿAyn al-Quḍāt turns to in the evaluation of the emanations that he has seen and discerned. He argues that distance and nearness are of mankind to God and not vice-versa because God is equally close to all of the creation at all times. In fact, all of the creation consists of varied degrees of luminosity or opacity, which form a spectrum of lights in relation to God as the Light of lights. In the final analysis, these manifestations, whether in the corporal or the spiritual realms, are illusive because they are still far from the essence of God. That is why Abū Yazīd admits: "When I looked [upon it all], all of it was I. I said: 'O Lord God, so long as a sense of "I" remains, there is no way from me to thee, nor have I any means of passing beyond the selfhood of self. What shall I do?"

The wayfarer perceives the overpowering grip of his self-identity and the self-contained identity of these realms, as he reaches the fringes of his own understanding and the limits of the world whose knowledge he has acquired. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt wishes to leave one realm in the unseen for the next. In order to escape this web of illusions in search of the truth, he dies to himself and is born into the realm that takes him closer to union with God. Therefore, his *miʿrāj* consists of a series of lives and deaths in the unseen that define and defy his ipseity in relation to God. The final pages of the *Tamhīdāt* conclude the spiritual quest of the author as follows:[230]

> Alas, gnosis does not have any end and we shall not reach an end. But of course we wish to arrive at an end, but we shall not. We neither have knowledge nor are ignorant, neither have seeking nor abandoning, neither have benefit nor are useless, neither are intoxicated nor sober, neither are together with ourself nor with him. What tribulation is more difficult than this! Is there a time when we are released from such ados?
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> I cannot reach to touch the locks of my beloved
> Nor does my hangover subside
> The more I ponder this affair
> I see my affair to be the agony of a world

The quest for union with God is forever curbed by the createdness of the creature. And the journey is but a fleeting flight away from oneself toward the One.

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[230] *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 468, p. 353.

## *Signs and Guides*

ʿAyn al-Quḍāt advises the reader not to seek the meaning of mystical death in the *sharīʿa* because doing so is abiding by habit; the meaning of mystical death is to be sought in "navigating the truth" (*ḥaqīqat varzī)* or conceiving the truth by means of experience. Mystical death is the baptism of the soul in the illuminations of God. The *Tamhīdāt* compares this death with the "second birth" that is vouchsafed by Christ. It cites Christ when he said, "He who is not born twice will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven."[231] The prophet Jesus identified the first birth to be the physical birth into this world in order to see oneself in this transient realm, which God loves so much to have given to it "... His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."[232] The second birth is out of one's self in order to see God and the world of the spirit. These births are focused on the corporeal side of existence and the dichotomy between the body and the spirit: the Fall, sin, body of Christ, and the salvation. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt identifies with the teachings of Christ but differentiates mystical death as the preoccupation with life on the spiritual plain and the event that allows for living and dying in the unseen worlds.

According to ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, the spiritual teacher plays a critical role in leading the disciple to the unseen of his mystical quest because the teacher has come in contact with these realms and knows the route of the journey. Therefore, he pays homage to his teacher Aḥmad Ghazzālī whose views on God's attribute of beauty take ʿAyn al-Quḍāt closer to the unseen realms.[233] ʿAyn al-Quḍāt explains that mystical death and the opening of the eye of insight are the vehicles that take him where he perceives the manifestations of God's beauty. This beauty is the texture of the world that opens before his sight and takes him to a more profound understanding of Heaven and Hell and the

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[231] John 3: 3.

[232] Ibid., 3: 16.

[233] Niẓām al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Ṣiddīqī al-Ḥusainī, *Karāmāt al-Awlīyāʾ*, MS 123, Catalogue no. 505, Biographies, Persian (Salar Jung Museum Library, Hyderabad), p. 331. This hagiography explains that Sulṭān Malik Shāh Saljūqī was a follower of Khawāja Aḥmad and had brought his son, Sanjar, to study with him. Sanjar was very beautiful. One day, Aḥmad drew him nigh and kissed him. Those who were present told the king about this. The king asked his son if he was kissed only on one cheek or on both cheeks. Sanjar said that he was kissed once. Malik Shāh said that means you will reign over half of the earth. Had you been kissed on both sides would had meant that you were to become the ruler of the whole world.

lights of Muḥammad and Satan. On the corporeal plain of existence, the divine beauty is reflected in the face of the beloved and the witness (*shāhid*) whose ensnaring allures elate and devastate the lover. This beauty ravishes his soul with the longing for the divine. The Prophet makes us wary of this beauty as he says: "Pay heed, the beardless youth has a complexion like that of God." The witness is a youth who is met in mystical literature as a dominant topos. The prophet Joseph is the archetypal representation of the beauty that is manifest in the witness. Poets and authors have aspired to the beauty of Joseph and his trials and tribulations of love and exile, which end with his triumphant return to his natal land and to his father. The scripture draws the climactic conclusion of the story from the theme of seeing and blindness as Joseph delights in his father, and Jacob reclaims his sight in beholding the beauty of his beloved son. In the same vein, the beauty of the witness, as his name reveals, is a metaphorical niche, an abode, and a country where the lover and the beloved make a dwelling of love and rejoice in the intimacy they share. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt defines this beauty as a bliss and a heaven that he has visited.[234]

> But the beloveds of God—the most exalted—have a heaven besides this paradise [of the general belief]. Muṣṭafā—God's praise be upon him—described this paradise saying that "on the night of ascension God told me: I promised my sincere servants what the eye does not see and the ear does not hear and what does not cross the heart of humanity." When His friends see Him, they are in heaven. And when they are without Him, they see themselves in hell.

Paradise and Hell are analogous with sight and blindness, gnosis and ignorance. The kind of seeing that is wrought through mystical death is a walk toward the paradise that is to be sought within the heart where the beauty of God can come into view. An extrinsic manifestation of that countenance is the beautiful face of the witness. Aḥmad Ghazzālī was among the early mystics who expounded on the Platonic idea of contemplating beauty as a mystical praxis. Ghazzālī trained his disciples to gaze upon and contemplate the beauty of the witness (*shāhīd*) in preparation for the encounter with the beauty of God. His *Sawāniḥ al-ʿUshshāq* is best described as a spiritual psychology of love. Ghazzālī, an extraordinary dramatist of the soul, enacts the altercations between the lover and the beloved at the level of human attractions. He sails through the turbulent human erotic passions and longings

[234] *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 381, p. 291.

and elaborates on how the wayfarer is perplexed and enlightened by beauty as he matures in love. The lover gains self-knowledge and gradually understands that his yearning for love is a symptom of his desire for the eternal beloved. He learns that the beautiful subject of his affection stands for the beauty that God bestowed on mankind when He created Adam in His own image. The lover's tantalizing relationship with the beloved leads him where he is submerged in the unfathomable depths of his own heart. As he is sinking into the sea that is his own heart, he has glimpses of God who appears and disappears in and out of view. This beauty motivates him to advance into the uncharted waters of this sea and find a better understanding of beauty, love, the beloved, passion, separation, and union. The teachings of Ghazzālī had a formative influence on ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, who identified the first visions of the unseen as transcendence into the beauty of God. Accordingly, he described mystical death as the portal to the testimonial monism (*waḥdat al-shuhūd*) in contrast to the unity of being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*). As was discussed before, he sees God equally close to all of the creation, but the creation at varied distances from Him. The beauty that he sees in the creation and in the divine realm of attributes manifest ways of approaching God.

ʿAyn al-Quḍāt pays homage to his spiritual teachers and also introduces himself to be an inspiring mentor for his own followers. He compares the teacher with the Prophet, for both have seen the unseen and are knowledgeable about the path. Furthermore, they communicate their knowledge to the disciple as revelatory reality. The introductory pages of *Zubdat al-Ḥaqāʾiq*, a major treatise from ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's early twenties, describe the inspiration for writing the text to have been the experience of the opening of the inner sight. The author identifies Aḥmad Ghazzālī as the person who facilitated this life-altering mystical experience and guided him in understanding it. The meeting is deemed so significant that it overshadows the main subject: the opening of the eye of insight. The attention that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt pays to Ghazzālī highlights the importance of the teacher on the spiritual path. In numerous places in his writing, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt speaks about his teachers and guides both in the visible and the invisible worlds. His famous saying is that whoever does not have a teacher is being instructed by Satan. In some of his letters, he boasts about his own qualities as a teacher and says that in a brief period of time he can prepare any disciple for the most exalted mystical unveilings. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's vital link with his deceased mentors is a significant focus in

his life. For instance, he begins one of his letters on the relationship between life and death with the powerful image of his visit to the tomb of Shaykh Fataḥa. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt tells the interlocutor that he was inspired to write the letter earlier that day while he was performing the ritual prayer at the tomb of Fataḥa.[235] In fact, visiting the tomb of this deceased Shaykh was a practice that he adopted under the tutelage of Baraka (Barakāt). He visited these burials as one would the shrine of a saint on a pilgrimage. These visitations inspired him with original insight into death and confirmed the relationship between ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and the deceased masters who guided him irrespective of physical distances. His writing is replete with references to these teachers and other spiritual guides, including angels and the Prophet Muḥammad. These connections confirm that enlightenment, intuition, the gradual opening of the eye of insight, and mystical death are fostered and developed through the interactions between the disciple and the teacher.

ʿAyn al-Quḍāt writes about the discussions that he and his scholarly community held on the *Qurʾān* and the *ḥadīth*, and the visionary experiences that they shared. In the *Tamhīdāt*, he sounds like a teacher who has the brightest of his students in mind as his true readers. In fact, the seriousness of his teachings persuaded Khawāja Banda Nawāz Gīsūdarāz, the Chishtī master of Deccan, to prohibit the novice among his students from having any access to the *Tamhīdāt*. This text was studied exclusively by the advanced initiates among the disciples of Gīsūdarāz. The elevated meanings that it contains include meditation on the esoteric meanings of the *Qurʾān* as an essential mystical practice. His writing is replete with Qurʾānic verses, which navigate the wayfarer on the path. Occasionally, he reminds the reader to recite certain verses or prayers for producing specific results. For instance, the second chapter in the *Tamhīdāt*, "Introducing the Second Principle: The Conditions for the Wayfarer on the Path of God," offers the following prayer inscribed at the head of the Secret Tablet in heaven (*al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ*):[236]

> O my God, I call upon Thee by Thy name, the hidden, the treasured. The revealed peace, the sacred holy, the purity and the pure. O You eternity, the ever lasting, the eternal, the pre-eternal, the One who does not perish; the eternal, the One who is neither born nor gives birth. He,

[235] *Maktūbāt*, vol. 2, letter 67, sec. 47, p.35.
[236] *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 52, p. 38.

> He, He, the One aside from whom there is not any god. The One aside from whom, no one knows what He is. The One aside from whom, no one knows where He is. O being, O existent, O spirit, the Being before all being and the Being after all being. O One who gives being to all being. "O Being of being. Lord of the armies."[237] O mighty, o lord of the boundless army. O manifester of the greatest of matters. Praise be upon Thee for Thy clemency in spite of Thy knowledge [of our sins]. Praise be upon Thee for Thy forgiveness in spite of Thy power. "But if they turn away, say: 'Allah sufficeth me: There is no god but He: On Him is my trust—He the Lord of the Throne (of Glory) Supreme!'"[238] May the praise of God be upon Muḥammad and the family of Muḥammad in abundance as the number of all things, in abundance as Thou didst bless Ibrahim and the family of Ibrahim and may Thy blessings be upon Muḥammad and the family of Muḥammad as Thou have blessest Ibrahim and the family of Ibrahim. Indeed Thou art praiseworthy and glorious.

Reciting this prayer will elicit spiritual openings in the soul because it evokes the existing connection between God and all of the creation. This prayer is unveiled to ʿAyn al-Quḍāt in his visions of the unseen. It is a testament that God is hidden but not hiding and as near and as far as the voice that beseeches Him. The lord who is beseeched is the personal God of the narrator who invokes Him in an affectionate voice as "my God." The narrator's intimate knowledge of God could well be the reason why ʿAyn al-Quḍāt declares that the Prophet is the only one worthy of reciting this prayer. The speaker identifies his God as the being of all of the creation who is at the same time distinct, beyond, and above the creation, time, and space: "O being, O existent, O spirit, the Being before all of being and the Being after all being. O One who gives being to all of being." The God who is conjured, "the hidden, the treasured," as His name shows, is revealed in being and at the same time concealed from it: His being permeates through the texture of all being. The act of uttering the name of this God and appealing to His omniscience and omnipresence asserts the connection between the eternal and the temporal. This connection is most audible in the voice of the beseecher as he calls to the God who brought him to existence by saying "Be." He calls out to the God who he knows is so near that all he has to do is reach out his hand and greet Him. His supplication

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[237] This line is in Hebrew but transliterated in Arabic. *Ehyeh asher ehye adōnā ṣēbʾōt*, (Exodus, 3:14).

[238] *Qurʾān*, 9: 129.

confirms God's justification for creating the world when He explained: "I was a hidden treasure. I would fain be known. So I created man."

Comparing God to a hidden treasure is a parable in the Bible.[239] ʿAyn al-Quḍāt was informed about Christianity and Judaism, which he makes mention of in this prayer as well. The inclusion of the other faiths into an interpretation of Islam, which conceives God to be the great manifestation in all of the creation, is characteristic of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt. In an economy of words, he brings together different faiths and different people in this supplication to God. The prayer embodies the following line in the original Hebrew that is transliterated in Arabic alphabet: "O Being of being. Lord of the armies." ʿAfīf ʿUsayrān notes the Hebrew origin of this line.[240] In the French translation of the *Tamhīdāt*, Christiane Tortel also refers to this line and argues that the present supplication is in reference to the Old Testament's Book of Exodus and Samuel. He argues that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt was using the Hebrew sources that he was introduced to through his contacts with the Jewish rabbis whose community at the time constituted ten percent of the population of Hamadhān.[241] At this juncture in the prayer, the lord is referred to as the lord of the armies or sabaoth.[242] This word comes from the Hebrew *tsebhāʾōthʾ*, and means armies or hosts and occurs twice in the Bible in the *Lord of Sabaoth*.[243] ʿAyn al-Quḍāt follows this sentence with the Arabic "O mighty, O lord of the boundless army." In this manner, he summons the people of different religions and creeds as the followers of the Being of all beings. His non-sectarian approach to faith brought him in contact with Jewish and other non-Muslim peoples and texts that he could access in his time. He concludes the discussion on this prayer with the assertion that the legitimate reciter of this prayer is the Prophet Muḥammad while the rest of us are subordinate to him.[244]

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[239] Matthew, 13:44. "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field."

[240] *Tamhīdāt*, p. 38n6.

[241] *ʿAyn al-Quzât Hamadâni, Les Tentations Métaphysiques*, translated by Christiane Tortel (Paris: Les Deux Océans, 1992), p. 70n1.

[242] This observation is based on a personal conversation I had with Professor Farhat Ziadeh in Seattle, Washington, on 10/24/2007.

[243] For a discussion on the etymology of this term by Valerius Maximus and its relationship with the cult of Jupiter Sabazius, see Peter Schafer, *Judeophobia: Attitudes Toward the Jews in the Ancient World*. 2d ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), p. 51.

[244] *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 52, p. 38.

ʿAyn al-Quḍāt does not allot this special status to the Prophet because he is the harbinger of Islam, but because he is the seal of the prophets and the one who was sent last to complete the teachings of the others. Moreover, the Prophet is the beloved of God and the archetypal teacher among men. Therefore, he is the most qualified to read the sacred writings in the unseen. By analogy, other spiritual teachers on the material plain, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and his own mentors among them, are the authorities on the teachings of the unseen and the spiritual advancement of their disciples.

## *Conjuring Death*

The inscription on the Secret Tablet is among the many mysteries that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt describes in his writing. Yet, he does not reveal any intimate secrets about the spiritual practices that he and his circle engaged in so as to enter the special realms of consciousness, which he identifies as mystical death and the opening of the eye of insight. In other words, he does not discuss how he was able to enter the unseen or what spiritual practices he and his friends followed in their seclusions (*khalwa*) and vigils. The meeting between ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and Ghazzālī, for instance, is characterized with inquiries as to what could have happened between them that initiated the subsequent Gestalt in the consciousness of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt. His silence on the pragmatic properties of mystical death and the opening of the inner sight is uncharacteristic of him, lavishly effusive as he usually is when discussing the secrets of the unseen. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's profuse descriptions are such that he is admonished by the Prophet, who appears to him and his intimates.[245] Therefore, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's refraining from disclosing the details of the meeting with Ghazzālī and his silence on the character of the esoteric exercises that he and his disciples performed raise questions about the origin of these practices.

Discussion of death as a mystical practice is not exclusive to ʿAyn al-Quḍāt. There are other mystics who describe comparable out-of-body and near-death experiences and provide guidelines on how these states can be reached. The Brahmans, yogis, and Buddhist lamas have for centuries taught meditation and yoga techniques that aim at the separation of the soul from the body and its transcendence into the

[245] Ibid., sec. 304, p. 234.

dimension that is identified as death. Among them, certain individuals are met who meditate their exodus from the body and the realm of material existence with the intention not to come back.[246] The teachings of these traditions clearly outline certain meditations, mantras, and yoga practices that cause the inner sight to open and the death experience to occur.

ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and his circle engaged in esoteric practices that are not explicable in an Islamic context. In one place in the *Tamhīdāt*, he describes a gathering of initiates at the house of a fellow mystic where the assembly takes part in dance and *samāʿ*. In their ecstasy and intoxication they have visions and perform wondrous acts, including causing one to die and another to rise from the dead.[247] One in the assembly is so moved by the proceedings that he declares his desire for instantaneous death. It is not specified if he is asking for his self to die or he wishes to die and leave this world permanently. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt invokes death and causes this person to die on the spot. His command illustrates that he is able to release the soul of the disciple from his body by, for instance, touching him or even casting a glance in his direction. Consequently, the disciple dies to his self, which is not identical to physical death. His death can also mean that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt lifted the veils that conceal the unseen and showed marvels to the disciple that he was not physically and spiritually capable of enduring; therefore, he became absent from himself to the degree that he died. A similar account is related of Abū Yazīd al-Biṣṭāmī, who once cast a glance at a disciple and caused him to perish. When he was asked about this death, Abū Yazīd explained that his glance unveiled secrets that the disciple was incapable of witnessing.[248] These incidents depict the connection of these shaykhs with the spiritual realms whose force and intensity are incompatible with our human capacity for understanding and are consequently unbearable. In the journey of death, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and his associates were constant visitors to these perilous terrains. The command that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt exercised over the corporeal realm is proof that the physical constraints of his humanity

[246] This kind of death, also called *mahasamādhi*, is based on the consious decision of the individual to exit the body. Dharmic traditions and Tibetan Buddhism are famous for its practice through yoga and meditation. This death is final but in contrast to suicide, it denotes the yogi or the spiritual master's enlightened decision to manifest his/her own exit out of the material world.

[247] *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 328, pp. 250–51.

[248] Aṭṭār, Farīd al-Dīn. *Tadhkarat al-Awliyāʾ*, 2d ed., vol. 1, edited by A. J. Arberry (Tehran: Dunyāyī Kitāb, 1982), pp. 142–43.

did not hamper his excursions into the unseen. His consciousness, which transcends matter and joins the subtle spiritual realms, perceives that all of creation is ultimately non-corporeal and our attachment to the body and matter is but a delusion. This gnosis enables him to base his mystical arguments on the knowledge that everything is light.[249]

> Alas, if I say what light is you would not bear it and the worlds will be turned upside down. But I will not withhold it, and I will say it by means of allusion. Hearken: "God is the light of the heaven and the earth"[250] means that He is the origin of "the heaven and the earth." The essence of the being of the earth and the sky is His light. Did not Ḥusayn-i Manṣūr tell you that "God is the origin of all the creatures?" His being is the source and the substance of all the creatures. It means " God and His light are the source of the lights."

God is manifest as light in all of creation, which is but different gradations of light. This perspective binds all of creation directly and securely to God. As the prayer on the Secret Tablet attests, God permeates all of creation and is the substance and the vehicle for the connection between different manifestations. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt admits that he is revealing secrets that are supposed to be kept hidden because human beings do not have the capacity to know them and still remain obedient to the all-merciful and forgiving God.

At one place in the *Tamhīdāt*, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt relates that his colleague Shaykh Siyāwash, visited and informed him that the Prophet appeared in his dream and admonished ʿAyn al-Quḍāt for his impatience in reaching union with God.[251] This is an extraordinary vision since the Prophet is said to appear only to the most select among the believers. The appearance of the Prophet in a person's dream is considered to be not fancy but reality because Satan cannot disguise himself as the Prophet.[252] This is a theme often mentioned in Islamic texts. We learn from al-Qushayrī that: "Some say there are meanings in sleep that are not available in wakefulness. Among them is seeing the Prophet, may peace be upon him, the companions, and the righteous of the past, in sleep and not in wakefulness; and also seeing

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[249] *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 338, p. 257.
[250] *Qurʾān*, 24: 35.
[251] *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 304, p. 234.
[252] ʿAbū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, *Al-Risāla al-Qushayrīya*, edited by ʿAbdal-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd and Maḥmūd ibn al-Sharīf (Cairo: Dār al-Shaʿb, 1973), p. 526; henceforth cited as Al-Qushayrī, *Al-Risāla al-Qushayrīya*.

the Truth in sleep. This is a great attribute."[253] ʿAyn al-Quḍāt explains that upon hearing the dream of Sīyāwash, he sank into himself, brooding over the message of the Prophet. As he came back, he saw the Prophet before him, who said, "Shaykh Sīyāwash could not tolerate seeing me in wakefulness, consequently, I appeared to him in his dream." In contrast, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt in his physical body and in a state of wakefulness could withstand the presence of the Prophet. This is another instance that demonstrates ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's ability to withstand the realities of the unseen. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt complains that some people interpret his abilities as acts of thaumaturgy.

## *Magical Wonders*

Such instances describe the stupefying quality of the visions and the events that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and his circle shared and explain why some regarded their activities as acts of sorcery. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt admits that he is at times so startled with the unveilings that his state might appear as that of an incarnationist (*ḥulūlī*). He rejects that his soul is overcome by any divine visitors and says the following:[254]

> Alas, I do not know what I am saying! At this station directions are obliterated. Any thing that the soul turns to becomes its prayer direction. "Withersoever ye turn, there is Allah's countenance"[255] is where there is neither night nor day. How can the soul seize time for the five prayers? "There is neither day nor night with my Lord" is this meaning. Pity on the charlatans of the age, the ignorant pseudo-scholars, the immature juveniles who count this path as incarnation! May my life be shed as sacrifice on the ground beneath the strides of such an incarnation!

The suspicion of being an incarnationist and a sorcerer existed despite his renown as an exceptional scholar of Islam who belonged to a family of judges. When he refers to the skeptics, he does not explain who exactly they are. We know that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt was in contact with persons from different walks of life and was equally at ease with the Muslim and the non-Muslim, the noble and the common, and the scholarly intellectual and the visionary mystic. His intimates and associates included the notables of Hamadhān, government officials and dignitaries, fellow initiates, scholars, and shaykhs who were not

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[253] Ibid., 529.
[254] *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 119, p. 83.
[255] *Qurʾān*, 2: 115.

necessarily famous or well educated. His shaykh, Baraka, for instance, had a limited knowledge of Arabic and was not even fluent in his native dialect of Hamadhān.[256] Nonetheless, his intuitive knowledge of the *Qurʾān* was so superior that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt attributes his own learning on this subject to the years that he spent in his tutelage. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's personal correspondence offers an understanding of his community and the extent of his public exposure to the elite and the common in Hamadhān. Consequently, when he expresses dismay that he is suspected of engaging in sorcery, the community at large, which includes his friends and foes, comes to mind.

Many Muslim mystics of the medieval period were accused of sorcery. Ḥallāj and Suhrawardī al-Maqtūl are famous examples among those who were reputed to perform white magic in order to impress the validity of their spiritual authority upon others. Ḥallāj was said to have acquired this art in India. Some even said that he went to India specifically to learn white magic. Massignon enumerates different medieval accounts on this subject, including the famous tale of the "Rope Trick." The version given in the *Kitāb al-ʿUyūn* offers interesting detail. A friend of Ḥallāj who accompanied him on a visit to Mecca, explains that after their pilgrimage Ḥallāj decided to stay behind and to not return to Iraq. He advised this friend "If you want to return with them, go ahead! As for me, I feel inclined to go from here to India."[257] The narrator decided to accompany him to India. He relates the following about Ḥallāj in India.

> Once there, he asked information about a certain woman, went to find her, and chatted with her. She arranged to meet him the next day; and the next day, she left with him for the sea coast, with a rope twisted and tied in knots, like a veritable ladder. Once there, the woman said some words, and she climbed up this rope—she placed her foot on the rope, and she climbed, so much that she disappeared from our sight. And Ḥallāj, returning to me, said 'This is why I came to India—to meet this woman.'"[258]

Suhrawardī is recorded to have performed wonders that were interpreted as sorcery. The famous Kurdish medieval biographer

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[256] *Maktūbāt*, vol. 2, letter 68, sec. 66, pp. 50–51.

[257] Louis Massignon, *The Passion of al-Hallāj: Mystic and Martyr of Islam*, vol. 1, translated by Herbert Mason, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 180.

[258] Ibid., pp. 180–81.

Abū al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad ibn al-Khallikān (A.D. 1211–1282) writes about his thaumaturgic abilities.[259]

> It is said that he knew the art of alchemy. Some Persian scholars who had left Damascus in his company relate that: "When we reached al-Qābūn, a village on the border of Damascus on the way of those who are heading toward Aleppo, we came upon a flock of sheep belonging to a Turkman. We told the Shaykh: 'Master, we need a sheep from among these in order to eat.' He said: 'I have ten *dirham*s take them and buy a sheep with them.' The Turkman was there and we bought a sheep from him. Then we walked a little but one of his companions caught up with us and said: 'Return this sheep and get a smaller one because he did not know about the exchange. This sheep is worth more than the price that it is sold for.' We got into arguing with him. When the Shaykh found out, he told us: 'Take the sheep and walk away. I will stay with him and make him content.' We set off and the Shaykh stayed, speaking with him deftly and amicably. As we went some distance away, the Shaykh left him and followed us. The Turkman kept after him, calling out and protesting but he did not pay any attention to him. As he did not speak with him, he [the Turkman] grabbed on to him with anger and grasped his left hand saying: 'Where are you going and leaving me?' Lo and behold, the arm of the Shaykh detached from his shoulder and remained in the hand of the Turkman, with blood streaming. The Turkman was astounded and petrified by this affair. He dropped the arm in fear. The Shaykh returned, took this arm with his right hand, and joined us. The Turkman headed back looking at him until he disappeared from view. When the Shaykh reached us, we saw in his right hand just a handkerchief and nothing else. Many stories such as this are said about him. God only knows about their validity.

Sorcery was one of the accusations that embellished the charge of heresy against Suhrawardī. The other charges, similar to those against Socrates, were corrupting religion and corrupting the young.[260] In the case of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, he came to his own defense and expressed regret that people suspected his extraordinary connection with the unseen as thaumaturgical acts of illusion and magic. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt was able to join the spiritual realms and alter and affect the composition of matter at that level. Accordingly, he could conjure life and death upon others, or converse with the Prophet, whose presence caused

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[259] Ibn Khallikān, *Wafīāt al-Aʿyān wa Anbāʾu Abnāʿ al-Zamān*, vol.6, edited by Iḥsān ʿAbbās (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1961), pp. 269–70.

[260] Hossein Ziai, "Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī: Founder of the Illuminationsit School," in *History of Islamic Philosophy*, edited by Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 435.

ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's companion Shaykh Siyāwash, who was another holy man of God, to burn.[261] In this account, Muḥammad manifests the light and the fire, which in ʿAyn al-Quḍāt represent God's attributes of beauty and majesty. In the present instance, he expresses himself as the emissary of these attributes. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt is represented as the confident who is capable and worthy of beholding the fire in Muḥammad's light without being harmed or hindered. By these lights, the Prophet reminds him of the message that he related through Shaykh Siyāwash about the veils that separate the creatures, including himself, from the divine. He reiterates the value of patience in accosting the thresholds of God. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt summarizes Muḥammad's message through Siyāwash: "Tell our ʿAyn al-Quḍāt to wait for a while; even we are not yet settled in the divine dwellings. Acquiesce to awaiting until the time comes for us to have all nearness without distance, and all union without separation."[262]

This vision is in accord with the account of the *miʿrāj* (ascension) of Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī, whom ʿAyn al-Quḍāt recalls at several places in this section of the *Tamhīdāt* (Introducing the Ninth Principle: An Explanation of the Reality of Faith and Faithlessness). Abū Yazīd also beholds the light and the fire of the Prophet as he comes in contact with him after he has held extensive conversations with God on the true identity of the lover and the beloved. Al-Sahlajī's (d. A.D. 1082 or 1083) account of Abū Yazīd's *miʿrāj* thus renders the encounter with the Prophet: "No soul of a prophet did I pass but that I greeted it and gave it my peace except the soul of Muḥammad. And lo! around his soul were a thousand veils of light which all but burst into flame at the first flash [I saw]."[263] The author of *Tadhkirat al-Awliyāʾ*, Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār (A.D. 1119–1230) describes this vision in more detail through the eyes of the soul.

> When it reached the soul of Muṣṭafā [Muhammad], it saw there a hundred thousand seas of fire without end and a thousand veils of light. Had I [so much] as dipped my foot into the first sea, I would have been burnt and would have given myself over to destruction. Consequently I became so distraught with awe and bewilderment that there was nothing left of me (*hīch na-māndam*). However much I longed to see

[261] *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 304, p. 234:

> A flicker blazed from the light of Muṣṭafā. A particle landed on him [Sīāwush] and he burnt on the spot. People think this is magic and sorcery.

[262] Ibid.

[263] R.C. Zaehner, *Hindu and Muslim Mysticism*, p. 217.

> [but] the tent-peg of the tent of Muhammad, the Messenger of God, I dared not. Although I had reached God (*ḥaqq*), I had not the courage to approach Muhammad.[264]

ʿAṭṭār interjects to provide an explanation as follows:

> This means that anyone can reach God in accordance with his capacities, for God is with all things; but Muhammad precedes them in a special sacred enclosure. Hence until you have crossed the valley of 'There is no god but God', you cannot attain to the valley of 'Muhammad is the Messenger of God'.[265]

He further explains that both valleys are one but are not perceived as such because the wayfarer sees them according to his or her own limitations.

ʿAyn al-Quḍāt describes his special ability to partake of these mysteries, which the people interpret as thaumaturgical acts. When he mentions that people misinterpret his powers, he does not explain whether these people are his adversaries in the government or the towns people of Hamadhān. His friend Kāmil al-Dawla, an official in the Saljūq bureaucracy, warns him of rumors and accusations against him.[266] Considering that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and his intimates held their *majālīs* (gatherings) in the privacy of their homes or hospices, as is evidenced in his letters and his other writings, the reference to the common people raises the suspicion that he did not conceal his ability to execute wondrous acts from the public, either intentionally or involuntarily. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt was introspective and astute but also reckless and impatient: characteristics that are paramount in Siyāwash's dream of the Prophet when he cautions ʿAyn al-Quḍāt not to reveal any more secrets. It is plausible that his wonder-making (*karāmāt*), similar to Suhrawardī's, was a part of his life that involved the public and went beyond the confines of his students and fellow associates. He would have done that intentionally in order to show signs verifying his sayings, involuntarily as he was absent from himself, or perhaps unconsciously to exercise his youthful desire for recognition and validation.

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[264] Ibid.
[265] Ibid.
[266] *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 329, p. 251.

## *The China of the Heart*

ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's unconventional personality and his controversial arguments on the nature of prophecy, Satan, death, and heresy, were issues of special scrutiny for his adversaries. These views belonged in the Islamic mystical tradition and were informed by the teachings of Ḥallāj according to whom the true believer questioned faith categorically in his/her quest for the "transcendence of duality" and union with God.[267] Ḥallāj was an advocate for infidelity, which he defined in terms of a restlessness on the part of the knowing wayfarer who considered all of his previous certitudes and declarations of faith as attestations to the dualism that separated him from God. In this context, idolatry and infidelity were one's assumption that he had attained knowledge of God. The wayfarer's questioning walk toward God, which the notional religion defined as infidelity, was his way of staying on course in his move toward union with God. Ḥallāj described faith, infidelity, knowledge, ignorance, and duality and its transcendence, as a confluence whose entirety was a manifestation of God.[268] ʿAyn al-Quḍāt aspired to the teachings of Ḥallāj and regarded Satan highly as the lover who negated the command of God and was thus proclaimed an infidel.[269] This is how Satan was cast on the path of scrutinizing his fateful infidelity and contemplating the inscrutable ways of God. This dynamic quest inspired the wayfarer to abandon religious law and become an infidel and a madman so that he could navigate his way through confusion and self-deception. Therefore, the non-Muslim and the idol-worshipper were not heretical on account of their belief. They were idolaters because they believed in one manifestation of God as the destination of their faith. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt argued that all of existence was subjected to idolatry because of its intrinsic distance from the unity of God. In this midst, the wayfarer was distinguished as the knowing idolater who rose against himself every step of the way, transcending duality. He exercised this ordeal through annihilation and subsistence.[270] This spiral cycle of dualistic

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[267] Carl Ernst, *Words of Ecstasy in Sufism*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 1985), p. 64.

[268] Ibid., p. 65.

[269] Ibid., pp. 78-79. Cf. Leonard Lewisohn, *Beyond Faith and Infidelity: The Sufi Poetry and Teachings of Mahmud Shabistari* (Richmond Surrey: Curzon, 1995), pp. 275–80.

[270] Ibid., pp. 79-82.

faith/infidelity extended into death and the infinite realms that the wayfarer witnessed in the unseen. Considering the quality of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's discussions on this subject, one can deduce that he was receptive to non-Islamic spiritual traditions that provided him with greater access to the unseen. As mentioned earlier, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt refrained from explaining how he was able to cross over into the realm of death. It is likely that his silence is to conceal the non-Islamic roots of the exercises that he practiced. His writings imply that some of his spiritual practices were attributed to the "heathen" of the East.

The discussion on traditional Islam and the five pillars of the religion provides him the opportunity to speak about what lies beyond the Muslim religious norms, rituals, and givens of faith. These discussions are set forth in the fifth chapter of the *Tamhīdāt*, "Describing the Five Pillars of Islam." The preceding and the following chapters are entitled "Know Yourself in Order to Know God," and "Reality and the States of Love." ʿAyn al-Quḍāt explains that the profession of faith, ritual prayer, fasting, alms tax, and pilgrimage to Mecca, are exoteric aspects of Islam. He argues, it is true that all Muslims should abide by them, but the mystic learns to perceive these duties as symbolic expressions of a visceral seeking after God. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt interprets the pillars of Islam not in light of piety and heresy or reward and punishment, but in the context of the journey through the heart to the China (*ṣīn*) of the quest.

ʿAyn al-Quḍāt employs the word China as a topos for a spiritual geography that depicts a transfused state of consciousness. He begins the chapter on the five pillars of Islam by quoting the Prophet who said that God commands Muslims to seek the knowledge of God and even go as far as China to attain it.[271] This is the second time that China is mentioned in the *Tamhīdāt*. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt uses China (*ṣīn*) as an intentionally ambiguous term which refers to the land China, the Qurʾānic chapter "Ṣād," and the ocean of knowledge that is identified by the letter *ṣād*, the fourteenth letter of the Arabic alphabet. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt works with these layers of meaning as he leads the wayfarer on the pilgrimage to the *kaʿba* of the heart. The purpose of the journey is twofold: to become aware that one carries the image of God within himself and that one is capable of finding God in one's heart. The wayfarer finds his way to his heart as an exile finds the way back to his homeland. His return journey is analogous to the Prophet's

[271] *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 88, pp. 64–65.

homecoming to his natal land Mecca, whence he was sent into exile earlier in his life.

In vernacular Persian, China and its environs (*chīn wa māchīn*) is used as an idiom denoting a milestone or an exotic venture; however, it is difficult to believe that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt is using this word merely as such because it is not part of his diction. In the *Tamhīdāt*, China is used in three instances and only when he writes about where the knowledge of God can be sought. The first reference is in the beginning of the *Tamhīdāt* when ʿAyn al-Quḍāt classifies four kinds of knowledge: human, angelic, creatural, and divine. The last of these is found in China, the route to which is through the heart of the wayfarer. This destination comes into view as the wayfarer gains self-knowledge. Initially, he ponders his heart through his thoughts, intentions, desires, and apprehensions. Then, visions of the unseen are revealed to him and he gauges the capacities of his heart in facing these hidden meanings. In this manner, he perceives the knowledge of God that is invested in his heart.

The last time that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt refers to China is when he identifies it as the prayer direction (*kaʿba*) of the heart.[272] He describes this place by turning to an early Meccan revelation, *al-Balad* (The City), of the *Qurʾān*:

لاَ أُقسِمُ بِهَذَا البَلَدِ / وأَنتَ حِلٌّ بِهَذَا البَلَد[273]

I do call to witness this city / And thou art a freeman of this city.

Mecca is the natal land of the Prophet where he enjoyed the freedom and the right of a full citizen. That is the city where he acknowledged his calling to prophethood and his allegiance to God. The Prophet, the archetypal wayfarer, witnessed his calling by attempting to purge the inmost center of the city, the *kaʿba*, from the idols and images that prevented the pilgrims from seeing the true beloved. He was attacked by his *Quraysh* kins and countrymen, was ostracized, and cast away to a place that he merely called the city (Madīna). This exile came to an end when he was able to find a safe voyage back to his homeland. By juxtaposing China with Mecca, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt reconstructs a decisive moment in the historical memory of Islam in order to explain the esoteric meaning of Mecca, the *kaʿba*, and the trials of the path.

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[272] Ibid., cf. sec. 113, p. 80.

[273] *Qurʾān*, 90: 1–2.

The center of action in this narrative consists of the Prophet, who is exiled from Mecca, and ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's wayfarer who strives to reach the citadel of his heart. The wayfarer rises against himself, and sets off in the direction of the *kaʿba* / China of his heart in order to purge it from false images. The China of his heart, like the China of popular culture, is where images of idols, deities, goddesses, and false beloveds rival the image of the true one. Like the Prophet who claimed the *kaʿba*, the wayfarer is free to claim the city within his heart even at the risk of being chased away by his own kins and tribesmen. The wayfarer is entangled with his self and his subjectivity: his confidents and his adversaries. These false, but real, companions of his heart distract him from his true father, just as Muḥammad's *Quraysh* tribesmen were surrogates for the father that he as an orphan did not have. The China of his heart is where the beloved is hidden among these idols. Unless the house is cleared of these images, the face of the beloved will not become visible.

As ʿAyn al-Quḍāt explains, there is an ocean that flows through the China of the heart. He identifies it as the ocean *ṣād* upon which the throne of Mercy floats.[274] This is an ocean that has been extensively discussed in Islamic literature. The sixth *imām*, Jaʿfar al-Ṣādīq (A.D. 702–65), whose esoteric commentary on the *Qurʾān* was a principal reference for the mystics, described the ocean *ṣād* as the ocean of gnosis that takes the wayfarer to the firmament (*ʿarsh*) and to the throne of God (*kursī*).[275] In *Sharḥ-i Shaṭḥīyyāt* (An Exegesis of Ecstatic Sayings), Rūzbihān Baqlī (A.D. 1128–1209 ) explains that the letter *ṣād* is the sight of the intelligences and the souls when they look upon the eternity. These mysteries are perceived by the intelligences and conveyed to the souls who manifest them as apparitions (*ashbāḥ*).[276] In ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's discussion, the ocean *ṣād* is an atemporal and aspatial place of no-place where there is neither day nor night, nor

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[274] Ibid., 11: 7.

> He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in six days—and His Throne was over the Waters—that He might try you, which of you is best in conduct. But if thou wert to say to them, "Ye shall indeed be raised up after death," the unbelievers would be sure to say "This is nothing but obvious sorcery!"

[275] Corbin, "Et son Trône était porté sur l'eau (Qorân 11/9)," *In principio: interprétations des premiers versets de la Genése* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1973), pp. 301–302.

[276] Rūzbihān Baqlī, *Sharḥ-i Shaṭḥīyyāt*, edited by Henry Corbin (Tehran: Ṭahūrī, 1995), p. 61.

heaven or earth.[277] This observation is important since the imagery of the day and night and the sun and the moon delineate the sphere of the light of Muḥammad from that of Satan. These distinctions are obliterated in the dominion of God's mercy or the light of *al-raḥmān*. This is the region where eternal emanations illuminate the first creation of God, the light of Muḥammad.

ʿAyn al-Quḍāt summons the reader to the shores of this ocean with the following verse from the *Qurʾān*, "ص وَالقُرءَانِ ذِی الذِّکرِ" (Sād, by the *Qurʾān*, full of *dhikr*).[278] This overture to the *sūra* highlights the importance of remembrance (*dhikr*) in taking the wayfarer to the threshold of the beloved. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt refers to a verse that begins with an abbreviated letter (*muqaṭṭaʿ*) that accentuates the significance of the breath, and in a single letter of the alphabet (*ṣād*, the fourteenth letter of the Arabic alphabet) connects the human to the divine as *dhikr* or a mantra is expected to do. The *ṣād* of the *Qurʾān* and the *ṣīn* (China) of the *ḥadīth* in ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's discussion are joined in the heart of the wayfarer through the stream of remembrance. In this context, China is introduced as a place of serenity where all the clutter, false images, attachments, and distractions, are cleared, so that the visage of the beloved can come into view. The wayfarer ultimately makes a dwelling in his heart where he conjures this image through the mantra. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's discussion on China suggests that he is camouflaging an actual reference to the territories of the "heathen," the yogis, Brahmans, astronomers, and shamans who lived east of Hamadhān, Bukhārā, and Khawārazm. His allusion is disguised in the garb of a popular idiom, which stands for the distant, the exotic, and the arduous. In his discussion, China as a geographic referent, even as a figure of speech, parallels Mecca and stands for a spiritual path to God.

## *Faith and Heresy*

A major discussion in the scholarship on Islamic mysticism concerns its relationship with the Indian and the Buddhist spiritual traditions and its philosophical and practical borrowings from them. The case of one of the earliest Muslim mystics, Abū Yazīd al-Biṣṭāmī, gave rise to

[277] *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 113, p. 80. Cf. Ibid, sec. 119, p. 83.
[278] *Qurʾān*, 38: 1, in *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 88, pp. 64–65.

much debate. Nicholson, the famous orientalist of the turn of the twentieth century, argued that al-Bisṭāmī was indebted to his Indian teacher Abū ʿAlī al-Sindī for his major discussions, specially on the subject of annihilation (*fanāʾ*). In the following years, this observation was supported by some and refuted by the others. Zaehner explained that al-Sindī was a convert to Islam about whom Abū Yazīd says: "I used to keep company with Abū ʿAlī al-Sindī and I used to show him how to perform the obligatory duties of Islam, and in exchange he would give me instruction in the divine unity (*tawḥīd*) and in the ultimate truths (*ḥaqāʾīq*)."[279] In the realm of practical rituals, Muslim mystics are said to have learned certain practices from their counterparts in the East. They chanted mantras, used the rosary, followed a restricted diet, and practiced meditation, seclusion, and yoga. The Muslim people of medieval Persia and its elite scholars, specifically, knew about the spiritual traditions of the Brahmans and the Buddhists of greater Iran and the Indian sub-continent. The history of the cultural, religious, and commercial exchanges between these people goes back to the pre-Islamic times of the Parthians, Soqdians, and the prophet Mānī.

There is an abundance of historical and cultural material tracing the life of these communities, Muslim converts or not, in the Bukhārā of Avicenna and Khawārazm of Abū al-Rayḥān Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Bīrūnī (A.D. 973–1048/1050). Avicenna's *Risālat al-Aḍḥawiya fī Amr al-Maʿād* (The Aḍḥawiya Treatise on the Subject of Resurrection), and Bīrūnī's *Tārīkh al-Hind* (Al-Beruni's India) speak extensively on the subject of the transmigration of the soul, reincarnation, and the spiritual traditions and practices of the Hindu and the Buddhist peoples in the Indian subcontinent. The journey of Manṣūr ibn Ḥallāj to India in search of spiritual wonders was widely discussed during his lifetime and for generations to come. Medieval historiography and mystical literature are replete with references to one of the archetypal early Muslim mystics, Prince Ibrāhīm ibn Adham (d. A.D. 777) who like Buddha renounced his courtly life in search of enlightenment and is called the Muslim Buddha. Ignac Goldziher, among others, argues for Buddhist influence on Islamic mysticism and its popular culture. He refers to the legend of Ibrāhīm ibn Adham as follows:

> It is plainly decisive of our question that the legend of one of the most eminent patriarchs of Sufism has the lineaments of the biography of the

[279] Zaehner, *Hindu and Muslim Mysticism*, pp. 93–94.

> Buddha. I have in mind the legend of the holy Ibrāhīm ibn Adham (d. ca. 160/162 = 776/778). Various legends propose various immediate motives for his flight from the world, but all versions serve a single theme: Ibrāhīm, the son of a king from Balkh—summoned, according to some reporters, by a divine voice; prompted, according to others, by contemplating the modest and carefree life of a poor man he observes from his palace window—casts aside his princely cloak and exchanges it for beggar's clothes, leaves his palace, severs all ties to this world—even to wife and child—goes to the desert, and there leads a wanderer's life.[280]

In ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's time, a detailed treatise on the life and the teachings of Buddha (*al-Budd*) was composed by the renowned author of *al-Milal wa al-Niḥal* (The Religions and the Sects), Abū al-Fatḥ Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdal-Karīm ibn Aḥmad al-Shahrastānī (A.D. 1076–1153), known as Tādj al-Dīn (the Crown of the Religion). This Muslim heresiographer remarked that the ethics of Buddhist path are very similar to those of the sufis.[281] Shahrastānī was thirty years older than ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and outlived him by twenty–two years. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt knew about Shahrastānī and his work either directly or through his teacher Aḥmad Ghazzālī, whose brother Muḥammad was a friend of Shahrastānī's teacher in Shāfiʿī jurisprudence, Qāḍī Abū al-Muẓaffar Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Khwafī (d. A.D. 1106).[282]

The discussion on faith and heresy is crucial for ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, who was known for his unswerving focus on transcending the limits of knowledge and the boundaries of any faith, even Islam.[283] It is natural that he is open to other religions, sects, and creeds and to their spiritual traditions. In his writing, he refers to the people of the book (Muslims, Jews and Christians), and although he does not identify Buddhist monks and the Brahmans, he speaks about the *zanādiqa*, the *majūs*, and the dualists. In his era, these terms included not only the Zoroastrians but also the Manichaeans, the dualists in general, Sabians, Buddhists, Hindus, and the atheists. Identifying the teachings of the monks and the Brahmans as an inspiration for his own spiritual practices had to be avoided, because any overt association between his

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[280] Ignaz Goldziher, *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law*, translated by Andras and Ruth Hamori, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 143.

[281] David Scott, "Buddhism and Islam: Past to Present Encounters and Interfaith Lessons," in *Numen*, 42: 2 (1995): 145.

[282] G. Monnot, "Al-Shahrastānī, Abu 'l-Fatḥ Muḥammad b. ʿAbdal-Karīm b. Aḥmad, Tādj al-Dīn," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition. Brill Online. University of Washington–LIBRARIES. August 30, 2007.

[283] Carl Ernst, *Words of Ecstasy in Sufism*, pp. 73-84.

ideas and theirs would have confirmed and sealed his fate as a heretic. The following is one of several examples in his writings that demonstrate his close affinity with the other spiritual traditions.[284]

> Alas, these meanings dawn on someone who has gone beyond seventy some various religions. One who has not yet seen one religion entirely is far from this discussion. Wait until these words light upon you that the Jews and the Christians said: "Indeed the lights issue from the essence of the Lord." They say: "Its light is issued" comes from Him. "God is the source of the creatures" means this. The Magi (fire worshippers) said, deity is dual: one Yazdān and that is light; the other, Ahriman and that is darkness. Light is the commander of devotion, and darkness the commander of sins. Light is the promise of day, and darkness the resurrection of night. *Kufr* comes from one and belief from the other. The heretics and the physicists said that the firmament is the creator of the world. They consider the elements to be eternal. The form of these intricacies has deprived them from the truth.

He argues that all belief systems, monistic or not, share in common the understanding that light is the source of all the creation. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt describes this light as the illuminations of God's essence that are trickled into the world of attributes. In this context, *kafr / kifr / kufr*, meaning concealing / darkness of the night / infidelity, which are deduced from the three letter Arabic root "*k - f - r*," describe disbelief as concealment of the truth, the absence of light, and the inability to see. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt was a genuine thinker who kept his mind and heart open to diverse systems of thought. The complex quality of his writing clearly demonstrates the breath and depth of his learning and cultural influences. His predilection for the other faiths did not stand at odds with how he articulated himself as a Muslim and how he relied on the teachings of the Prophet and the *Qurʾān*. Against this background, he speaks about a God who issues through all of the creation regardless of how He is perceived. The seeker ultimately finds this abstract but intimate god through stages in his own heart. Through death, the content of the heart is the consciousness that transcends the physical realm into other dimensions of being. These arguments are found among the non-Muslim sages who appear in his writing.

Just as ʿAyn al-Quḍāt was informed about the rabbinic and the apostolic teachings, he knew about the teachings of the Buddhist monks through oral and written accounts that were in circulation during his time. The popular beliefs on Buddhism had existed in Persia

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[284] *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 401, pp. 304–5.

since ancient times and were alive among the Turkish tribes of Central Asia whose more Spartan and ambitious members formed the dominant dynasties, the Ghaznawī and the Saljūq, which for centuries ruled over Persia. The case of a later mystic ʿAlāʾ al-Dawla al-Simnānī (A.D. 1261–1336) provides valuable insight on the intricate quality of the hybrid culture at the court of his Mongol patron Arghūn (r. A.D. 1284–92) who was known for his firm Buddhist beliefs and his antagonism toward Islam. Simnānī was a zealous Muslim from the same region in Iran as Ghazzālī and ʿAyn al-Quḍāt. He belonged to a noble family of land-owners and court administrators. As a young man of twenty–six, while he was in the service of Arghūn, he left his court without leave in order to travel to Baghdād and meet a famous mystic, Nūr al-Dīn Isfarāʾinī. His escape was interrupted as Arghūn, who was fond of him, sent troops to Hamadhān and brought him back.[285] After his forced return, Arghūn ordered him to enter a debate with a Buddhist monk "... but Simnānī defeated the Buddhist by demonstrating that he was ignorant of the true meaning of Buddha's teachings."[286] Their match points to the blended quality of the religious culture of Simnānī's era whence a devout Muslim scholar emerged with such an in-depth knowledge of Buddhism that he could challenge a monk. In this context, it is significant to add that Simnānī was motivated to travel to Baghdād in order to meet the Shaykh of his Muslim prayer companion. Simnānī first learned about this teacher by observing his friend as he followed his methodology of repeating a certain mantra (*dhikr*).[287] When Simnānī repeated the *dhikr*, he was transported into a state unlike any that he had experienced before. The mantra was repeated regularly along with energy-control techniques

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[285] Jamal J. Elias, *The Throne Carrier of God: The Life and Thought of ʿAlāʾ Ad-Dawla As-Simnānī* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1995), pp. 25-26.

[286] Ibid., p. 26.

[287] Ibid., 24. His prayer companion, Ḥanawayh was a student of Isfarāʾinī.

> Ḥanawayh stated that his *shaykh* had taught him the practice and he did not dare alter it. Then he explained the significance of moving his head:
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> With the *lā ilāha* (There is no god) I negate everything besides God, and with the *illaʾllāh* (except Allāh) I affirm the love of God in the heart. I move so that the energy of the *dhikr* reaches the pineal [physical] heart which is located in the flank of the human body. As a result, the transparency (*shaffāfī*) which lies between this [physical] heart and the real [mystical] heart becomes actualized, and the light of faith casts a ray from the real heart upon the human body.
>
> Upon hearing this, Simnānī beseched Ḥanawayh to teach this *dhikr*. ... Through Ḥanawayh he became a follower of Isfarāʾinī.

employed in yoga and meditation. This practice resonated closely with Simnānī who regardless of his scorn for his Buddhist challenger, had an affinity for such spiritual exercises that were prevalent among the Buddhist members of his community.

In addition to the cultural memories that comprised the rich history of the interactions among the Muslims and the Buddhists of Iran and its neighboring regions, tales about India and its fabulous traditions were current in ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's Hamadhān. Situated in the *Jibāl*, this city was a major metropolis on the Silk Route to Baghdād and Rūm and offered lodging for merchants and travellers from China and the Indian subcontinent. The most famous medieval text on India and its religious traditions is *Tārīkh al-Hind* (Al-Beruni's India) of al-Bīrūnī (A.D. 973–1048/1050), the renowned scientist and anthropologist of medieval Islam. Al-Bīrūnī conducted research for this work in the course of several travels to India as a member of Sultan Maḥmūd Ghaznawī's entourage during his India expedition campaigns. *Tārīkh al-Hind* was finally completed in A.D. 1030 as an encyclopedic compilation on India. The text included detailed discussions on the topography and inhabitants of India, its traditions, sciences, and the Brahmans and the other sects and their religious traditions. Al-Bīrūnī provided extensive information on the art of meditation and the yogic life. His observations on India were supported through the written and oral sources that he obtained during his research there. The chapter entitled *About What is Due to the Bodies of the Dead and of the Living (i.e., About Burying and Suicide)*, speaks about Socrates in the *Phaedo* and *Crito*, Galens, the Alexandrian Neoplatonist Johannes Grammaticus, the Zoroastrians, Mani, the Hindus, and the Buddha.[288] These references demonstrate the breadth and depth of the knowledge that comprised the intellectual sensibility of his era. Al-Bīrūnī appealed to these sources in the search for the meaning of life and death: his approach underscored the significance of India and its non-Islamic traditions in this quest.

It has been argued that al-Bīrūnī's work on India was not widely read during his time.[289] Lack of familiarity with this work could not

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[288] Abū al-Rayḥān Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Bīrūnī, *Al-Beruni's India: An Account of the Religion, Philosophy, Literature, Geography, Chronology, Astronomy, Customs, Laws, and Astrology of India About A.D. 1030*, translated by Eduard Sachau (Delhi: S. Chand, 1964), pp. 167–71.

[289] Bruce B. Lawrence, "The Use of Hindu Religious Texts in al-Biruni's *India* with Special Reference to Patanjali's Yoga-Sutras," in *The Scholar and the Saint: Studies in*

apply to the generation of scholars who were contemporaneous with him. The celebrated scholar of Hamadhān, Avicenna was informed about al-Bīrūnī's work. The two had known each other and were in contact, although their relationship was contentious. They were about the same age (Avicenna was seven years younger) and shared many similar interests in medicine, philosophy, and the natural and the astral universe. Earlier in their lives, they both had been protégés of Manṣūr ibn Nūḥ al-Sāmānid of Bukhārā. They lived in the same region and moved in the same scholarly circles. They had mutual friends and colleagues such as Abū Sahl ʿIsā ibn Yaḥyā al-Masīḥī al-Jurjānī, the famous Christian physician who collaborated closely with al-Bīrūnī and accompanied Avicenna on his escape from Maḥmūd's conquest of the Khwarazmid territories. This resulted in the capture of al-Bīrūnī and his eventual recruitment as the astrologer of the Ghaznawī court.[290] This background demonstrates that Avicenna and al-Bīrūnī were informed about each others' lives and works. Their correspondence (*al-Asʾilah wa al-Ajwibah*) chronicles the involved and competitive quality of their association. This is considered the most important scholarly correspondence of al-Bīrūnī during his lifetime.[291] He poses eighteen questions to Avicenna: eight on Aristotle's *al-Samāʾ wa al-ʿĀlam* (*De Caelo*) and eight questions concerning natural sciences.[292] Avicenna, considered the Muslim master of Peripatetic philosophy and the foremost authority on Aristotle, responds to these questions and is in turn challenged by al-Bīrūnī. Their scholarly interactions were more extensive than these questions and answers and reveal that others in their intellectual milieu participated in the development of

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*Commemoration of Abu'l Rayhan al-Biruni and Jalal al-Din al-Rumi*, edited by Peter J. Chelkowski (New York: New York University Press, 1975), pp. 29–48. Cf. Carl Ernst, "The Islamization of Yoga in the *Amrtakunda* Translations," in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, s. 3, 13:2 (2003): p. 204.

[290] Boilot, D.J. "Al-Bīrūnī Abūʾl-Rayḥān Muḥammad b. Aḥmad, " *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition. Brill Online. University of Washington–LIBRARIES. September 12, 2008.

[291] Al-Bīrūnī and Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Asʾilah waʾl-Ajwibah*, edited by Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Mehdi Mohaghegh (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 1995), p. 2. For a serialized English translation of *Al-Asʾilah waʾl-Ajwibah*, see Rafik Berjak and Muzaffar Iqbal, "Ibn Sina—Al-Biruni Correspondence," in *Islam and Science*, vol. 1, no. 1 (June 2003), p. 9; vol. 1, no. 2 (December 2003), p. 253; vol. 2, no. 1 (Summer 2004), p. 57; vol. 2, no. 2 (Winter 2004), p. 181; vol. 3, no. 1 (Summer 2005), p. 57; vol. 3, no. 2 (Winter 2005), p. 166; vol.4, no. 2 (Winter 2006) p. 165; vol. 5, no. 1 (Summer 2007), p. 53.

[292] Al-Bīrūnī and Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Asʾilah waʾl-Ajwibah*, pp. 2–8.

their debates.[293] Avicenna's disciples Abū Saʿīd Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī al-Maʿṣūmī, known as al-Faqīh, on behalf of his mentor, responds to al-Bīrūnī's challenging answers to Avicenna. His assignment to this task sheds light on some of the disputes and disagreements that existed between his master and al-Bīrūnī.

This background is significant as it demonstrates that al-Bīrūnī was a familiar figure in the discourse that involved Avicennan scholarship. Although, *al-Asʾilah wa al-Ajwibah* is focused on the natural sciences, Aristotle, and the Peripatetic philosophy, the in-depth and involved quality of this exchange is proof that Avicenna and al-Bīrūnī, along with their disciples, were well informed about each other's research and projects. Accordingly, al-Bīrūnī's work on India was available to a large scholarly circle, at least among his Iranian colleagues. The learned grandfather of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt lived during the time of al-Bīrūnī and Avicenna, who was celebrated as the acclaimed prodigy of Hamadhān. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt himself was an avid reader of Avicenna and undoubtedly knew about the exchanges between him and al-Bīrūnī. Considering ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's intellectual and spiritual curiosity, even if the others were not interested in al-Bīrūnī's work on *Yogasutra* and the spiritual practices of India, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt would not have been among them. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt would have known about this work either on the merits of the author or through his relationship with Avicenna. That he did not mention al-Bīrūnī or his findings on Indian spirituality in his own writing is for the obvious reason that he was already suspected of being a heretic and any such references would have identified him as a heathen.

The recent publications of Carl Ernst on the surviving yoga instructional materials in the medieval Muslim world argue that the popular consensus among the Persian-speaking people was that Indian and Persian mystical traditions were closely linked and Persian mystics were inspired by the spiritual traditions of their Indian fellow wayfarers. Ernst calls attention to the surviving Persian manuscript copies of the *Treatise on the Human Body* (*Risāla-i Wujūdiyya*), also titled the *Treatise on the Nature of Yoga* (*Risala-i Sarmaya-i Jūg*).[294] The manuscripts were widely circulated in the major languages of

[293] Ibid., p. k. Yaḥyā Mahdawī is cited in the introduction to the edited Arabic text, explaining that the surviving information on the correspondence between Avicenna and al-Bīrūnī argues for several contacts between them.

[294] Carl Ernst, "Two Versions of a Persian Text on Yoga and Cosmology: Attributed to Shaykh Muʿin al-Din Chishti," *Elixir* 2 (2006): 69–76.

Islam: Persian, Turkish, and Arabic. The large number of these manuscripts indicates the scope of their dissemination throughout the region among the mystical communities of South Asia and the Middle East. The manual on hatha yoga, describes the significance of breath control in reaching enlightenment. The text traces the movement of the breath into the physical and the spiritual organs of the body and the chakra centers and offers a definition of man as the microcosm. Enlightenment is attained by means of establishing a parallel correspondence between one's body parts and the constellations and the cosmological order of the universe. The yoga instructions are intended to highlight the significance of the breath and the connectedness of the body and the spirit. As Ernst explains, the manuscript identifies the author as Shaykh Muʾīn al-Dīn Chishtī (d. A.D. 1236) the founder of the Chishtī order. He explains:

> Why should such a collection of teachings with Indic psycho-physical practices be attributed to Muʿin al-Din Chishti? In one sense, this pseudoepigraphic attribution is an indication of the seriousness with which Indian Sufis approached the practices of yoga. In other words, these teachings were important enough that they should have been part of the teaching of the greatest Sufi master in Chishti tradition. This attribution is paralleled by the phenomenon we see in the circulation of the most important Arabic work on hatha yoga, *The Pool of Nectar*, which in many manuscripts is attributed to the great Andalusian Sufi master Shaykh Muhyi al-Din Ibn ʿArabī (d. 1240). From a strictly historical perspective, neither attribution can really be sustained; but it is striking to see that people felt that this should have been the case.[295]

Muʾīn al-Dīn Chishtī is recorded as the author in these manuscript copies, which were produced in the seventeenth century, long after his time.[296] Ernst explains that Muʾīn al-Dīn's hagiographies depict him in intimate settings with his non-Muslim Indian associates; he is shown in "thaumaturgic contests with the yogi Ajaipal." This notwithstanding, Ernst explains that it is unlikely that Muʾīn al-Dīn is the author of this treatise for the obvious reason that authorship was not permissible among the early Chishtīs.[297] He concludes that it was the popular culture that determined this attribution. The Persian rendition from Hindi of the oral and the written yoga materials, as evidenced in this manuscript, adhered to the consensus that a renowned Muslim mystic

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[295] Ibid., p. 70.
[296] Ibid., p. 69.
[297] Ibid.

scholar from India offered these valuable and esoteric teachings toward enlightenment.[298] The ultimate goal was to induce an out-of-body or near-death experience through which the consciousness is separated from the body. These exercises faciliated access to the visionary perception of the unseen.

Such teachings and exercises would have proved instrumental for ʿAyn al-Quḍāt who induced in himself the spiritual state that he called mystical death.

### *Mystical Death and the Unseen*

ʿAyn al-Quḍāt explains that when mystical death occurs, Doomsday is revealed to the wayfarer. Although the details of this experience are not disclosed, the rest of the *Tamhīdāt* is devoted to this type of death, and the discussions there revolve around it—in numerous places ʿAyn al-Quḍāt explains his mystical knowledge in terms of death and its ensuing opening of the inner sight (*infitāḥ ʿayn al-baṣīra*). According to ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, the mystic who arrives at this station acquires a kind of inspirational knowledge or knowledge by proximity (*al-ʿilm al-ladunnī*). ʿAyn al-Quḍāt is referring to an esoteric perception through death whose acquisition involves intimate and personal properties. As personal and intimate as this experience can be, it has been described by other mystics, Muslim and non-Muslim, for centuries.

In Islamic mysticism, Najm al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Khīwaqī, surnamed Kubrā (d. A.D. 1221), sees death as the shortest and the most effective means of acquiring knowledge of the real. He explains that both death and mysticism involve the separation of the soul from the body. Death is the absolute liberation of the soul from the crass dominance of the body, and mysticism its intermittent breaks from it. In fact, mysticism is the art of extracting the light of the soul from the darkness of the natural elements, which Kubrā identifies as earth, wind, fire, and water. As the mystic is separated from his body, he is able to perceive

[298] Ibid., p. 70. Ernst compares the two Persian manuscripts and concludes that the inconsistencies in these texts testify to the oral quality of the transmission of the yogic material.

> The general impression is of texts that are basically transcriptions of oral teachings given at different times and places by disciples who may have had a more or less sure grasp of the contents.

other dimensions of being.[299] Like ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, Kubrā argues that the wayfarer can induce death in himself while he is still alive on the material plain of existence. Some of the most captivating passages in the *Fawāʾiḥ al-Jamāl wa-Fawātiḥ al-Jalāl* (Perfumes of Beauty and the Preambles of Majesty) concern this discussion. In one passage, Kubrā describes how he passed through several stations toward the station of *ikhlās* (intimacy). In this walk, he was confronted with an orb-shaped presence that blocked his passage. Kubrā intuitively perceived that the only way through is by means of death.[300] This realization was, in effect, his assent to pass through the gate of death. He involuntarily proceeded through this veil and at this juncture, experienced death as terror (*hayba*).[301] As he transcended this intense trembling, he arrived at one of the stations of divine mercy. He believed this place to be heaven and the shaykh whom he met there the personification of this heaven. He also saw an assembly of dark-eyed maidens who took him behind the veils into all but one chamber. He saw himself wrapped in his burial shroud, free from the heaviness of the earth, floating between the sky and the earth. As he descended to the ground, the maidens sat him on a throne. Then the shaykh approached him and reminded him that he was on ascension to the thresholds of his Lord. This understanding filled him with the love of God and the certainty of faith.

It is noteworthy that Kubrā provides information on how this death process occurs. He identifies remembrance (*dhikr*), seclusion (*khalwa*), and the shaykh (both the manifest and the hidden), as the primary mediums. The aim of remembrance is to become consumed by the words of the *Qurʾān* to the degree that the heart of the mystic, and not his tongue, would repeat the *dhikr* on its own accord. Sometimes, the mystic can actually hear his heart chanting the *dhikr*. According to Kubrā, Qurʾānic verses navigate the wayfarer into his heart and hence to the realm of mystical wisdom. The wayfarer steps into seclusion with longing for closer proximity to God. He is resolved on leaving behind vain desires like seeing the flashes of the unseen, experiencing colors, or gaining repute among his peers.[302] He goes into seclusion as though he is stepping into his own grave without any possibility of coming back. There, he attempts to depart from the world of sense

[299] Meier, *Die Fawāʾiḥ*, sec. 12–13, pp. 5–6.
[300] Ibid., sec. 117–18, p. 56.
[301] Ibid., sec. 119, pp. 56-57.
[302] Ibid., sec. 124, p. 59.

perception by first scrutinizing the depths of his own humanity, by greeting his personal demons, and then averting all the fancy and temptation that distract him from the contemplation of God. His shaykh assists him with this venture, guiding him, and protecting him against the perils and confusions of the path. The latter are the creatures and the forces in the unseen that can lead him astray. Needless to say, Satan is the one who orchestrates these assaults and even personally appears to the wayfarer with the intent to bemuse himself and deceive the wayfarer. The shaykh knows the path and knows when it is time for the disciple to come out of his seclusion.[303]

Kubrā explains that the wayfarer observes his own transformations as he is separating from his body. He sees that he is at the bottom of a well and the well is descending fast below him or that he is ascending the well toward its opening. Sometimes he sees himself as a voyager on a sea, sailing past shores with hamlets and villages. The darkness of the well and the villages on the shore stand for his carnal spirits and that which he is leaving behind. His pensive gaze at the forlorn dwellings and abodes of his past depict the journeying soul in an air of excitement and nostalgia. The soul is set free and yet has his old habitat, the body and the security of forms, in his periphery as he is afloat in a collapsing vortex. These visions define death as a movement away from the security of the body onto a free fall into the unforeseen.

Similar visions are recorded in Suhrawardī's *Qiṣṣat al-Ghurba al-Gharbīya* (The Tale of the Occidental Exile). Suhrawardī's wayfarer learns that he can ascend the well of his imprisonment when night falls and the senses are dormant either in sleep or in the quiet of vigil and supplication.[304] Sometimes, he witnesses flashes of light and has visitations by the harbingers from the homeland. All along, Qurʾānic verses illuminate his path and direct him to the next station. The *Qurʾān*, the substance of *dhikr*, functions as a cord that connects him to God and keeps him abreast with his true aim and destination. Suhrawardī offers specific verses as a roadmap that he has followed in finding his way on the path of mystical wisdom. These verses have helped him understand the meaning of the events that have befallen him and have directed him to the next stage. The Qurʾānic references attest to the relationship that exists between this text, as an expression of spiritual realities, and the realm of material existence where man can venture to pursue these truths. In this discussion, a significant *sūra*

[303] Ibid., sec. 161–64, pp. 79–81.
[304] Suhrawardī, *Qiṣṣat al-Ghurba al-Gharbīya*, sec. 5–8.

is *al-Naml* (The Ant), which chronicles Solomn's knowledge of mystical wisdom including his gift for understanding the language of the animals. In *al-Naml*, the hoopoe is the link between Solomon and the sun-worshiping heathens whom he delivers to the light of monotheistic faith. In *Qiṣṣat al-Ghurba al-Gharbīya*, the conspicuous hoopoe visits the narrator, just as it visited King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, and delivers a letter from his Father to him.[305] The letter admonishes him for his amnesia about his origins and invites him to embark on the journey home. The journey, in effect, is the journey of recalling his true identity and reclaiming it. In order to go back, the hoopoe informs the prisoner that he has to board a ship and set sail on a turbulent sea that proves to be fraught with ventures of self-discovery, death, and elation.[306] The main theme of Suhrawardī's visionary treatise is the journey toward a state that the *Qurʾān* describes as *al-ṭāmma al-kubrā* (the Great Event) or *al-ṭawr al-aʿẓam* (the Exalted State). The hoopoe conveys the message to the wayfarer using verses from the *Qurʾān*, as follows:

> 13) When you reach the "valley of the ants"[307] then shake off the tail of your garment and say: "Praise be to God who brought me back to life after He caused me to die."[308] And the "return is to Him."[309] And then, eliminate your family.
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> 14) And kill your wife "she is of those who lag behind."[310] And proceed to the place where you are ordered[311] "That the last remnants of those (sinners) should be cut off by the morning."[312] Then board the ship[313] and say: "In the name of Allah, whether it move or be at rest!"[314]
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> 15) And he explained in the letter, all that exists on the path. The hoopoe stepped forth, the sun reached above our head when we reached the edge of the shadow. We boarded the ship so it set off with us "on the

[305] Ibid., sec. 10. The hoopoe says: "Indeed, I know how to release you and I came to you, from Sabā with tidings true (*Qurʾān*, 27: 22). And it is explained in the letter of your Father."
[306] Ibid., sec. 9–15.
[307] *Qurʾān*, 27: 18.
[308] Cf. Ibid., 2: 243, 260.
[309] Ibid., 67: 15.
[310] Ibid., 29: 32.
[311] Cf. Ibid., 15: 65.
[312] Ibid., 18: 65.
[313] Ibid., 18: 71.
[314] Ibid., 11: 41.

> waves (towering) like mountains."[315] While we desired to ascend the mount Sinai so that we would visit the hermitage of our father.

Both Suhrawardī and Kubrā use the metaphor of the well and the ship to describe the separation of the soul from the body and its sentient awareness of the life that it has led so far. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt does not provide such personal descriptions, but he refers to the same experience as the Doomsday of the soul who observes its experiences in bond with the body and its separation from it. Suhrawardī and Kubrā mention a significant beacon on the path to be a green light that in the *Qiṣṣat al-Ghurba al-Gharbīya* identifies the shores of the fathomless green sea, and in Kubrā describes a light that issues from the heart. For these authors and for ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, the heart is the shore or the link between the physical and the spiritual. The wayfarer who reaches his heart is made aware that death is in reach and his soul is going to embark of knowledge by proximity to God.

Fritz Meier, in his comprehensive study of Kubrā, *Die Fawāʾiḥ al-Ǧamāl wa-Fawātiḥ al-Ǧalāl des Naǧm ad-Dīn al-Kubrā*, explains that Kubrā considers the paths to God to be innumerable, the most exalted being that of "willful death" (*der Weg des "willentlichen Todes", d. h. des Aufgebens des Eigenwillens im Willen Gottes)*. This is the path of executing the surrender of one's will to the will of God to the degree of conjuring death upon one's self.[316] Meier explains this subject as follows:[317]

> In *Uṣūl al-ʿAshara*, Kubrā remarks that (adopting an apparently widespread dictum) the paths to God are as numerous as the breathing of living beings. However, these can be reduced to three main paths. The first is through frequent performance of ritual exercises such as prayer, fasting, reading of the *Qurʾān*, pilgrimage, holy war, etc., which are merely "external actions." The second is through spiritual battle and exercises, that is, the path of asceticism for the purpose of changing the character, purifying the soul, cleansing the heart, and adorning the spirit, which are exclusively "internal actions." The first path almost never leads to the goal, the second only seldom. The shortest one is the third one, the path of "wilful death," i.e., the giving up of the individual will to the will of God. It is based on the fulfillment of the ten basic conditions: repentance, asceticism, trust in God, modesty, solitude, permanent thinking of God, confession of unity, patience, self-observance, contentment, each of which he discusses individually.

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[315] Ibid., 11: 43.
[316] Meier, *Die Fawāʾiḥ*, p. 93.
[317] Ibid.

> Although one's own striving is not denied by this, but rather subordinated to the thought of giving up the individual will, it becomes fully clear that Kubrā is indeed ascetic, but beyond that he is a mystic of consciousness; he preaches a special internal attitude, and indeed the giving up of any resistance toward God.

The mystic places himself in a paradoxical situation: he willfully gives up his own will to the will of God.[318] This kind of "willing" involves self-transmutation and the surrender of all attachments to the body at the risk of never returning to it. The wayfarer who is set on the journey proceeds into the unseen (*ghayb)* further and further away from the flesh.

According to ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, the unseen is the mystery of God and the hidden realm of realities that are in His vicinity (*al-ladunnī*). These realities are inaccessible to reason and thus unknowable through language and thought. Moreover, the mysteries of the *ghayb* are hidden from men; God reveals these mysteries to men only as He wishes. The *Qurʾān*, for instance, is a revelation of some of these divine mysteries and an instance of the coming together of these intrinsic illuminations and the external realities.[319] In ʿAyn al-Quḍāt the unseen consists of innumerable worlds. The mystic comes in touch with these worlds and experiences their realities through death. Knowledge of the *ghayb* is the mystery that is known to God and whomever He wishes to enlighten.[320] ʿAyn al-Quḍāt explains that knowledge by proximity is revealed to the intimates of God (*awliyāʾ*) because they are friends of God and enjoy a special proximity to Him. In the *Tamhīdāt* he defines these people among the most select of men.[321] They are distinct from the prophets and do not perform miracles, but are in touch with the *ghayb* and gifted with the ability to produce

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[318] Cf. Elias, *The Throne Carrier of God*, pp. 142–44. Simnānī defines this kind of death as the goal of all mystical practices and relates its different degress to the levels of the spiritual body.

[319] Gaudefroy-Demombynes, "*Les sens du substantif Gayb dans le Coran*," in *Mélanges*, edited by Louis Massignon (Damas: Institut français, 1956–57) p. 250.

[320] *Qurʾān*, 18: 65

فَوَجَدَا عَبداً مِن عِبادِنَا / ءَاتَيْنَهُ رَحمَةً مِّن عِندِنَا / وَعَلَّمْنَهُ مِن لَّدُنَّا عِلماً

So they found / one of Our servants / on whom We had bestowed / Mercy from Ourselves / And whom We had taught / Knowledge from Our own Presence.

[321] *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 54–60, pp. 39–44. He explains, there are three categories of men: (1) have the appearance of men but are void of the truth of being human (2) have the appearance of men and are cognizant of the truth of being human (3) are the chosen men of God who have experienced His Truth.

wonders (*karāmāt*). For ʿAyn al-Quḍāt the friends of God are in touch with the same mysteries as the prophets. The prophets are distinguished from the *awliyāʾ* by virtue of their mission: to teach and to guide the masses. In fact, the status of the friends of God is so high that the Prophet Muḥammad describes their position in respect to God as that of his own. It is in this connection that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt refers to the Prophet Muḥammad in order to emphasize the elevated status of the *awliyāʾ*.[322]

> This group is not for an instance devoid of observation and presence. Have you not heard this *ḥadith*: "I know people who have the same status with God as I do. They are neither prophets nor martyrs, but the prophets and the martyrs envy them for their place with God. They love each other by God's spirit." He said: "They revealed a people to me from my community whose station by God—the most Exalted—is like my station. They are not prophets or martyrs, but the prophets and the martyrs envy their position and station and desire that. They love each other for the sake of God."

Miracles and *karāmāt* are signs indicating the supra-rational nature of the realities in the *ghayb*. In his discussion on the special abilities of the friends of God, the eleventh-century Iranian Muslim scholar Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī describes these *karāmāt* as a testament to the realities of the unseen. Human reason, he further explains, is incapable of understanding these realities.[323] ʿAyn al-Quḍāt elaborates this point in different contexts, and most specifically in his discussion on knowledge by proximity (*al-ʿilm al-ladunnī*). He, of course, declares that he himself is endowed with this knowledge and is in touch with the unseen. He asserts with confidence that whoever wishes to hear unmediated secrets of the divine, should seek them from ʿAyn al-Quḍāt.[324] Moreover, he expresses concern that he is disclosing secrets from the *ghayb* that he must not reveal. In fact, he ends the *Tamhīdāt* in the middle of a discussion on the realities of the *ghayb* because he is told by the Prophet not to disclose any more secrets.[325]

The *Qurʾān* refers to *ghayb* and *ghayba* in thirty–six verses where *ghayba* is defined as the unseen whose mysteries are hidden from men. Consider, for instance, the following verses:

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[322] Ibid., sec. 61, pp. 44–5.
[323] Al-Qushayrī, *Al-Risāla al-Qushayrīya*, pp. 485–86.
[324] *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 394, p. 300.
[325] Ibid., sec. 469, p. 353.

قُل لاَ يَعلَمُ مَن فى السَّمَواتِ وَالأَرضِ الغَيبَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَمَا يَشعُرُونَ أَيَّانَ يُبعَثُونَ[326]

Say: None in the heavens or the earth, except Allah, knows what is hidden. Nor be they perceive when they shall be raised up (for judgement).

وَلَوكُنتُ أَعلَمُ الغَيبَ لَا ستَكثَرتُ مِنَ الخَيرِ وَمَا مَسَّنِيَ السُّوءُ[327]

If I had knowledge of the unseen, I should have multiplied all good, and no evil should have touched me.

The unseen is also referred to as a state that the faithful believe in through the teachings of the messengers of God.

وَمَاكَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُطلِعَكُم عَلَى الغَيبِ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَجتَبِى مِن رُّسُلِهِ مَن يَشَآءُ فَآمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ[328]

Nor will Allah disclose to you the secrets of the unseen. But He chooses of His Messengers (For the purpose) whom He pleases. So believe in Allah and His Messengers.

The unseen and its mysteries are the knowledge that is exclusive to God and His intimates. Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, in his treatise on mysticism *al-Risāla al-Qushayrīya*, explains *ghayba* as the state when the heart of the mystic is absent from this world and is filled with the realities in the unseen.[329] ʿAyn al-Quḍāt describes the unseen and the place of the heart in relation to it through mystical death and the relationship between the "body" and the "soul." He explains, the soul is neither connected with nor disconnected from the body and from this world.[330] In a similar manner, God is neither connected to the world nor disconnected from it, and by analogy this is the case with the unseen. The transitional state of the soul and the cosmos allows the fluctuation between the visible world of matter and the unseen that

[326] *Qurʾān*, 27: 65.
[327] Ibid., 7: 188.
[328] Ibid., 3: 179.
[329] Al-Qushayrī, *Al-Risāla al-Qushayrīya*, p. 141.
[330] *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 212, pp. 157–58.

only becomes apparent after death. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt complements his discussion with the following verse:[331]

> The Truth is hidden within the soul and the soul within the heart,
> O you, the hidden within hidden within hidden within the hidden
> Such an obvious mystery with sign and expression
> O you, the world within a world within a world within the world.

Turning to the Prophet Muḥammad, he describes the soul of man as a spiritual body.

> The souls are a troop among the troops of God. They are not like the angels; they have heads and hands and feet and they eat food.
>
> Have you ever heard that the soul has hands and feet and eats food? If you want to know perfectly, listen to the striver who said: "Indeed in the body of man is a creature among the creatures of God, who has the appearance of man but is not human." He said: in the body of man there is a creature and a visage like man; it has the appearance of man, but is not human and is not from the world of the frame and humanity; it is from the world of "Praise to God the best Creator."[332]

Khawāja Banda Nawāz Gīsūdarāz explains that the inner sight is one of the five subtle organs whose locus is the heart. Once the inner sight is opened, the wayfarer would conceive the mystery of the soul. He would see that upon awakening from death, each soul invokes the attributes that the person has cultivated in it. The attributes are defined as metaphors that are comprehensible to us and to our imagination. For instance, goodness and compassion are expressed as images of beauty, running water, or a garden. Lust and gluttony are manifested as a goat, whereas vile and wickedness show themselves as reptiles. This is the reason that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt uses the metaphor of man with his limbs to refer to the soul.[333] He means to say that our humanity is not the body and the limbs that we see. Rather, there is another body within us called the soul. The soul is among the most beautiful creations of God.

The soul is from the realm of God.[334] It now resides in the body, but it belongs to the other realm. More specifically, the souls of men come

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[331] Ibid., p. 158.

[332] Ibid., sec. 196–97, pp. 144–45.

[333] Gīsūdarāz, *Sharḥ Zubdat al-Ḥaqāʾīq al-Maʿrūf bi Sharḥ Tamhīdāt*, edited by ʿAṭā Ḥusayn (Hyderabad: Muʿīn Press, 1945), pp. 236–41.

[334] The souls of the humans come from either the light of God's might (*qahr*) or mercy (*raḥmān)*.

from either the light of God's majesty or the light of His beauty and yearn for their source. In mystical death, the soul has left the world of matter but it is not disconnected from the body. The un-disconnected soul is the anchor that brings the wayfarer back into the body; it is also the vehicle that takes the wayfarer away from the flesh. The function of the soul as the agent of departure and return justifies the act of "willfully giving up one's will" in "death" (as discussed by Najm al-Dīn al-Kubrā). Namely, the decision on the part of the wayfarer to let his soul extend away from his body stands in conflict with the "thought-less-ness" that relieves the soul from the confines of the body. At this juncture, the wayfarer is still grounded in his body since he is willfully unmooring his soul for the journey. Yet this transcendence requires an abandoning of reason and of any thought processes, including "willing," in order to allow the flight of the soul away from the flesh into the realm of death.

In the *Tamhīdāt*, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt describes this situation in a morbid depiction of his own body awaiting the return of his soul. Here, on this side, his corpse-like body is the spectre of inquiries and concerns; while on the other side, his otherworldly hosts are hesitant about taking him deeper into the unknown.[335]

> Alas, in this heavenly garden I described, this wretch was held for a month—so that people thought me dead. Then with utter reluctance they sent me to a different station where I stayed for yet more time. In this second stage, a sin was born of me in consequence of which you will some day see, I shall be killed.

In the passage above, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt describes his absence (*ghayba*) from this world. He says that he was in a garden where he spent a month before he was taken to another station. In the *Tamhīdāt*, he does not elaborate on this place or the details of his journey. However, it is clear that he is referring to the same place-of-noplace that ʿAbū Ḥāmid Muḥammad Ghazzālī in his discussion on the unseen also calls the garden.[336] Ghazzālī explains that as some of the "prophetic lights" (*al-anwār al-nabawīya*) appear in the heart of the wayfarer, his physical senses lose their command on his consciousness. At this point, the wayfarer can connect to the supra-rational realities that are conveyed by these lights. By joining the reality beyond the world of matter, he sees what others see only in sleep as they are dreaming. The

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[335] *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 301, pp. 231–32.

[336] Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad Ghazzālī, *The Niche of Lights*, p. 35.

wayfarer goes past observing these realities in the capacity of a spectator, and becomes a participant in the events that unfold around him. He understands himself and other things through a new perception. He understands that he has crossed over into the unseen through his faith, because it is faith that draws one to a world named "the garden".[337] This understanding is reached as the wayfarer begins partaking of the mystery. The garden becomes manifest in the relationship between the wayfarer and the unseen in his assertion that it is his faith that has guided him to break away from the world of matter and his own body. In the *Tamhīdāt*, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's reference to the garden is an allusion to the same concept in Ghazzālī.

Notwithstanding the Islamic context of the present discussion, the Tibetan Buddhist monks have testified to experiencing similar "events" during their out-of-body journeys. The Tibetans have, for centuries, discussed the subject of the "death journey" in a similar process of identity, vision, and discovery. They have considered this subject within the context of the reincarnation of the soul and have developed sophisticated teachings in this area: the source for these teachings has been the findings made by those monks who have "exercised" death and departed from this world into the other. These voyagers have gone on the death journey and returned with a memory of the unseen.[338] Their excursions into death are the substance of their teachings, just as ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's insights are a consequence of his death experience.

The teachings of the Tibetan monks on death are meant to prepare and to empower one to greet death consciously.[339] According to these

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[337] Ibid.

[338] Padma Sambhava, *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, translated by Robert A.F. Thurman (New York, London: Bantam Books, 1994), p. 18.

They (the Tibetans) have credible accounts by enlightened voyagers who have gone through the between experience consciously, preserved the memory, and reported their experiences.

[339] The teachings of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* are intended to prepare the consciousness for the *Bardo* state. These teachings are meant to protect the consciousness against the fear and the anxiety of death and to direct the consciousness toward enlightenment. Preparing for death through the knowledge of the *Bardo* states helps the consciousness against being traumatized when it faces the lights and the deities of the intermediary realm. On the contrary, entering death prepared for these challenges, helps the consciousness to move in the direction of Buddhahood. That is why the Tibetan manuscript on death is subtitled "liberation through understanding in the Between." In other words, the key to death is understanding the true value and destination of the consciousness and liberation through that understanding.

teachings, one's familiarity with the experience of death enables one to anticipate and to cope with the lights and the deities that one will encounter in the bardo-states (transitional or the between states). This topic is discussed in detail in the *Bardo Thödol*, known in the West as *The Book of Liberation Through Understanding in the Between* or *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*.[340] This text was purportedly written in the eight or the ninth century by a Buddhist teacher named Padma Sambhava.[341] The psychologist Carl G. Jung (1875–1961), wrote the introduction to its Swiss edition (*Das Tibetansische Totenbuch*) in 1938. His introduction was translated into English and prefaced the third English edition of the book in 1957.[342] After a heart attack in Switzerland in 1944, Jung had a near-death-experience himself, which he discusses in detail in *Visions / Life after Death*.[343] During his near-death-experience, Jung witnessed the separation of his consciousness from his body and its flight into fantastic locales and circumstances. Needless to say, his experience was interrupted with his resuscitation.[344] Jung's interest in the *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, which had made its first appearance in Europe in the late 1920s, predates his near-death-experience by almost twenty years.[345] While many individuals, like Jung, have reported instances of near-death or out-of-body experiences, according to the teachings of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, trained voyagers have been able consciously to transcend the

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[340] Sambhava, *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, p. xxi. Robert Thurman explains: "The most common Tibetan title of the work is *The Great Book of Natural Liberation Through Understanding in the Between (Bardo thos grol chen mo)*. It is itself a subsection of a larger work called *The Profound Teaching of The Natural Liberation Through Contemplating the Mild and the Fierce Buddha Deities*."

[341] It was discovered in the fourteenth century by Karma Lingpa. The American anthropologist Walter Yeeling Evans-Wentz (1878–1965) learned of this text in the 1920s while he was staying in India. He became the first western scholar to translate *Bardo Thödol* into English and introduce it to the West; it was published in London in 1927. Evans-Wentz called this text *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*.

[342] Karma-glin-pa, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead: or, The After-Death Experiences on the Bardo Plane, According to Lāma Kazi Dawa-Samdup's English Rendering*, 3rd ed., translated by Walter Yeeling Evans-Wentz (London: Oxford Univeristy Press, 1957), pp. xxxv-lii; henceforth cited as *The After-Death Experiences*.

[343] Carl G. Jung, "Visions / Life after Death," in *The Near Death Experience*, edited by Lee W. Bailey and Jenny Yates (New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 101–2.

[344] Ibid., pp. 105–6. During his near-death-experience Jung had realized that his doctor was going to die soon. When he communicated this information to him in order to warn him about his safety, the doctor dismissed both his near-death-experience and his warnings. The doctor died a few weeks later.

[345] *The After-Death Experiences*, p. xxxvi.

plain of existence that we call life and enter the plain of existence that we call death and return with information about death and dying.

*The Tibetan Book of the Dead* is a compilation of teachings and prayers that are based on the accounts of these voyagers who experienced the realms between death and reincarnation (*bardo states*) consciously and were able to remember their insights. The teachings of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* describe the process of dying and explain how through meditation, prayer, and teaching, the confusion one experiences after death can be minimized or avoided. In the *bardo* state between death and reincarnation, one's consciousness encounters different kinds of lights and deities, which are its own projection. This projection is not subjective, i.e., fantastical, but an expression of the creative power of the consciousness that creates a reality outside itself in which it can become frozen and distracted from liberation. Consider the following prayer:

> Hey! Now when the reality between dawns upon me,
> I will let go of the hallucinations of instinctive terror,
> Enter the recognition of all objects as my mind's own visions,
> And understand this as the pattern of perception in the between;
> Come to this moment, arrived at this most critical cessation,
> I will not fear my own visions of deities mild and fierce![346]

Tibetan teachings on dying and death are instructions and prayers to prepare one for understanding this process. For the Tibetans, these teachings constitute an important part of their lives; they practice these prayers and meditations regularly. A *lama* reads segments from the *Bardo Thödol* to the dying person and continues reciting from the book after he or she has died for sometimes up to forty nine days. Tibetans believe that one's consciousness will be reincarnated at some time during this period. Reciting by the corpse is based on the belief that the subtle consciousness of the deceased may still be lingering by or in his or her body. These prayers and teachings are recited in order to caution his or her consciousness about the perils of the new journey. The practice is meant to assist the deceased in recognizing his or her consciousness as a clear light that will appear to him or her. The deceased must concentrate on joining this light.

> Hey! Noble one, you named So-and-so! Now the time has come for you to seek the way. Just as your breath stops, the objective clear light of

[346] Sambhava, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, p. 132.

> the first between will dawn as previously described to you by your teacher. Your outer breath stops and you experience reality stark and void like space, your immaculate naked awareness dawning clear and void without horizon or center. At that instant, you yourself must recognize it as yourself, you must stay with that experience. I will describe it again to you at that moment.[347]

These instructions are read over the corpse of the dead person and are addressed to his or her consciousness that has left the body and is observing it, feeling compassion for it. The consciousness is encouraged to abandon its attachment to the body, to turn away from it, and to go toward the clear light. The consciousness needs to recognize its own basic nature as the clear light and to recognize that the deities it sees in the *death-bardo* are its own projections. If it does not recognize this light, it will see wrathful deities, who are also its own projections, and it will fall prey to the confusion of the *bardo*. Consequently, it will become frozen in fear and will choose its next reincarnation unwisely. These prayers help the consciousness of the dead person access higher stages of awareness and to evolve. In accordance with this, Tibetan teachings describe an eschatology of the lights that dawn upon the consciousness in the afterlife. The monks who have faced these lights in the special realms of consciousness have seen them, not all at once, but through a gradual process. The unveiling of these lights corresponds to different stages of perception as well as the spiritual maturity of the wayfarer who has experienced them. Hence, the wayfarer sees death as a form of illumination.

An interesting comparison can be made with Plato's discussions that conceive death as a source of knowledge and illumination. Plato's discussions are based on his own meditations on this subject as well as reports of persons who experienced near-death-journeys.[348] In Book Ten of the *Republic*, Plato refers to Er, the son of Armenius, who was killed in battle but at his funeral on the twelfth day after his death came back to life. Er described how his soul departed from his body and journeyed into the other world and saw mysteries of the afterlife. There, he was bidden to observe and to hearken to all that was passing around him because he was going to be sent back to tell mankind

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[347] Ibid., p. 122.

[348] Lee W. Bailey, "Unknown Well-Known Near-Death Experiences: Peter Sellers, Eddie Rickenbacker, Plato, and Black Elk," in *The Near Death Experience* (New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 78–81.

about the other world.[349] Another example is the metaphor of the cave, in Book Seven of the *Republic*, that can be interpreted as the flight of the soul away from the opaque shadow world of matter into the illuminated world of reality.[350] The inhabitants of the cave are chained together and form an ordinary and familiar society of the unaware. When one of them is set free and able to leave the cave, he is first dazzled by the sun and then astounded by the contrast between what he sees and what he used to conceive as living. The emancipated prisoner represents the philosopher who, contemplating beauty, approaches the vision of the "forms." His flight of imagination facilitates his escape from the cave of ignorance. He sees what lies beyond the play of shadows; yet he is suspended between knowledge and ignorance, since he remains a voyager on an incessantly illuminating journey: each and every glimpse of light is a revelation denouncing the vision he had previously held to be true. His position in relation to the sun, his distance from the cave, and his angle of vision are metaphors for his position and perspective in relation to reality and the effect his perspective has on that reality. Plato concludes that the prison-house is the visible world of shadows and images, the light of the fire is the sun, and the journey of the unchained man is the ascent of the soul into the world of the intellect.[351]

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[349] Plato, *The Republic: The Complete and Unabridged Jowett Translation*, translated by Benjamin Jowett (New York: Vintage Classics, 1991), pp. 388–97; henceforth cited as Plato, *The Republic*. The vision of Er, son of Armenius, begins as follows:

Well, I said, I will tell you a tale; not one of the tales which Odysseus tells to the hero Alcinous, yet this too is a tale of a hero, Er the son of Armenius, a Pamphylian by birth. He was slain in battle, and ten days afterwards, when the bodies of the dead were taken up already in a state of corruption, his body was found unaffected by decay, and carried away home to be buried. And on the twelfth day, as he was lying on the funeral pyre, he returned to life and told them what he had seen in the other world. He said that when his soul left the body he went on a journey with a great company, and that they came to a mysterious place at which there were two openings in the earth; they were near together, and over against them were two other epenings in the heaven above. ...

[350] Ibid., pp. 253–57. The metaphor of the cave begins as follows:

And now, I said, let me show in a figure how far our nature is enlightened or unenlightened: —Behold! human beings living in an underground den, which has a mouth open towards the light and reaching all along the den; here they have been from their childhood, and have their legs and necks chained so that they cannot move, and can only see before them, being prevented by the chains from turning round their heads. Above and behind them a fire is blazing at a distance, and between the fire and the prisoners there is a raised way; and you will see, if you look, a low wall built along the way, like the screen which marionette players have in front of them, over which they show the puppets.

[351] Ibid., p. 257.

Conceiving death in light imagery is present in world religions. In the examples presented here, however, the understanding of death is associated with the accounts of individuals who related to others their personal findings on this matter. In a similar manner, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt describes death as the passage into the realm of visionary experience. This death is different from death of the body because it is not involuntary. In other words, the mystic who has intentionally and deliberately renounced life as we know it moves toward mystical death. The latter signifies the separation of the consciousness from the body and its joining with the divine consciousness. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt explains, this is an esoteric state that is incomprehensible to those who have not experienced it.[352]

> I realize that these words do not exist in your world of habit. The world of habit is that of the [Islamic] law, and abiding by the law is abiding by habitude. Unless you give up habitude and abandon it, you cannot traverse the truth. If you can dare, give in to these verses and see what they say:
>
> Alas, that this law is the religion of recklessness
> Our religion is heresy and *zandaqa*
> Faith and faithlessness are the face of that ravishing idol
> Faith and faithlessness on our path are both unity
>
> Death is separation and life is meeting and rapture. What can be said about the union? Alas "There is no knowing except by seeing"; how can one who is not ensnared by love and by the witness know of this? If you want to know this more clearly, for us death is heresy and life is Islam and unity.

The wayfarer interacts with the unseen and experiences visions that leave him doubting his religious convictions. He perceives everything to be the expressions of the same reality or the visage of God. The personal dimension of mystical death does not reduce these visions to the subjective projection of one's mind. These visions are a coming together of all of being whence good and evil and fidelity and heresy emerge as one. The individual wayfarer perceives this reality in accordance with his or her own capacity for its integration and translation. Rudolf Otto is a modern scholar of religion who speaks of similar conceptions of faith in *Das Heilige* (The Idea of the Holy). Otto's study considers religion and faith as expressions of coming in

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[352] *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 419, pp. 320–21.

contact with the divine. Otto looks at the "feelings" and the "states" of mind that the individual can experience once he sees himself connected with the divine. Otto understands the divine to be an objective reality independent of the individual who experiences a "numinous feeling" toward it. In this context, the word "feeling" conveys a mode of consciousness and awareness of the presence of the divine. The latter is a reality that is felt, that is there to be acknowledged.

ʿAyn al-Quḍāt describes his faith as the result of a mode of seeing the mysteries of the *ghayb*. He describes this kind of seeing as a mode of perceiving a reality that exists independent of one's consciousness. The consciousness of a wayfarer is specific to him and defined in relation to him. Therefore, what he sees is neither separate from him nor a figment of his imagination. For instance, in the passage above, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt refers to the visions he had in the realm of God's attributes and in his familiar paradoxical diction describes mystical death as a deviation from the givens of religion, toward a new kind of exercising faith. The latter finds its genesis in the visions the wayfarer has while he is in this special realm of experience. As will be discussed in the following chapter, the visions after death involve Muḥammad and Satan, who are described by ʿAyn al-Quḍāt as light and different degrees of visibility. It is in this context that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt defines the reality of Satan as separation from the beloved, and the reality of Muḥammad as close proximity to the beloved. Satan, who disobeyed the command of God and was condemned to separation, is associated with the wayfarer who through mystical death is engaged in renouncing his own self in order to accost the beloved. In this context, mystical death conveys a range of relationships with personal and cosmological significations. Another example of the association between the individual and the cosmological realities is the relationship between the *Qurʾān* and the wayfarer. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt associates mystical death with the *Qurʾān* by comparing verses from the *Qurʾān* with stages of visionary discovery through death. He represents the *Qurʾān* as an articulation of the mysteries of the unseen (*ghayb*), and describes death as a form of immediate and unmediated comprehension of the Qurʾānic truths. The wayfarer who has conjured death upon himself understands these truths just as he understands death.

ʿAyn al-Quḍāt explains that mystical death is the first state that the wayfarer experiences as he is approaching the unseen (*ghayb*). As the wayfarer greets this death, his own Doomsday appears before him. He defines the Doomsday as an individual and personal experience and

not a communal cataclysmic event destined to take place at a designated juncture in time. The Doomsday is an essential part of the transcendence that the wayfarer undergoes. Moreover, it is individual because it unveils the contents of one's heart and all that one has invested in it. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt turns to the Qurʾānic *sūra*, *al-ʿĀdiyāt* (Those Who Run), to explain this point.

أَفَلا يَعلَمُ إِذَا بُعثِرَ مَا فِي القُبُورِ / وَحُصِّلَ مَا فِي الصُّدُورِ / إِنَّ رَبَّهُم بِهِم يَومَئِذٍ لَخَبِيرٌ[353]

> Does he not know when that which is in the graves is scattered abroad /And that which is (locked up) in (human) breasts is made manifest / That their Lord had been well-acquainted with them, (even to) that Day?

Describing his own experience of mystical death, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt explains that at this stage he was shown the prophets and their nations. The prophets each had two lights and their nations one, but Muḥammad was all light and his followers had two lights.[354] Muḥammad is distinguished from others because his light is from the light of God, which is above and beyond light.[355] ʿAyn al-Quḍāt further explains that Jesus, also, shared a special affinity with God, which is why Christians call him "the son of God." Notwithstanding this, Muḥammad is "more light" than any of His prophets and the closest to Him. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's attitude toward Muḥammad and the *Qurʾān* brings to mind the medieval commentator of the *Tamhīdāt*, Khawājah Gīsūdarāz, who says ʿAyn al-Quḍāt saw everything as light and emphasizes that he perceived Muḥammad and the *Qurʾān* as light.

ʿAyn al-Quḍāt asserts that the wayfarer who is able to experience the mystical death and the unseen resembles the prophets (*yushbihūn al-anbiyāʾ*).[356] Such a man is chosen by God to contemplate the ascension of the heart (*miʿrāj-i qalb*) because the heart is the mirror in which God beholds Himself and also where the wayfarer partakes of His light. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt turns to the *Qurʾān*, which says:

نَارُ اللَّهِ المُوقَدَةُ / الَّتِي تَطَّلِعُ عَلَى الأَفئِدَة[357]

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[353] *Qurʾān*, 100: 9–11.
[354] *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 422, pp. 322–23.
[355] Ibid., sec. 423, p. 323.
[356] Ibid., sec. 70, p. 51.
[357] *Qurʾān*, 104: 6–7.

> (It is) the fire of (the wrath of) Allah kindled (to a blaze) / That which doth mount (right) to the hearts.

He explains the beginning of mystical death as follows: a flame from the fire of this love (God's majesty) kindles and its ray reaches the wayfarer. The humanity (*basharīya)* of the wayfarer, that is a challenge to his escape into death, is scourged by the light of this fire. In this manner, the wayfarer is freed to roam the terrains of death and the mysteries that the *Qurʾān* alludes to are disclosed to him. These mysteries include the verse, "Every soul shall have a taste of death"[358] that in different contexts in the *Qurʾān* is followed by the promise or the warning of the eventual return of all to God. The wayfarer conceives the essence of this promise and thus sets out upon the path of death where he realizes the transient nature of life as he has known it thus far.

ʿAyn al-Quḍāt defines mystical death as a mode of seeing mysteries with the inner sight. The opening of the inner sight—discussed in the following chapter—is a process that is refined and vivified as the wayfarer goes through the realms of death. Upon his return to this side, in the world of matter, the wayfarer who has experienced seeing with the inner sight is able to distinguish between the "reality" and the "appearance."

[358] Ibid., 3: 185, 21: 35, 29: 57.

CHAPTER FOUR

# APPEARANCE AND REALITY

The wayfarer who reaches the station of mystical death comes to see himself in a new light and therefore comports himself in the hue of this light. His perspective, his understanding of himself, and his "walk," involve an eschatology and a rhetoric that elevate him above the institutions and the authorities that define faith for the community of believers. This eschatology and rhetoric correspond to the wayfarer's stance in his relationship with himself and his manner of asserting his self-identity. According to ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, a person who reaches the station of mystical death and experiences mysteries of the unseen is like the prophets inspired by love and ecstasy and can surrender to the will of God.[359] The first mystery that is unveiled to the wayfarer is the realm of God's attributes. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt defines God's attributes as the lights of Muḥammad and Satan. The wayfarer who experiences these realities, like the prophets, is among God's select human beings. The following discussion will demonstrate how these themes are elaborated in ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's writing. It will refer to the teachings of Aḥmad and Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad Ghazzālī as well as other mystics who describe a personal understanding of God through an epistemology and a psychology of lights and the opening of the inner sight.

## *Everything is Light || Light is Everything*

In the state of mystical death the consciousness of the wayfarer is transformed, but he can still recognize this transformed consciousness as his own. This is not the case in annihilation (*fanāʾ*), when the wayfarer is accosting the presence of God. At this stage, his consciousness is replaced with the consciousness of the Divine. *Fanāʾ* is the state of consciousness that is ascribed to the realm of God's essence or the realm past the realm of attributes. It is an advanced spiritual state that is not attainable by all who have passed through

[359] *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 69, pp. 50–51.

mystical death. In this state, the consciousness of the wayfarer is transformed to the extent that he conceives himself to be God. *Fanāʾ* itself has different gradations. For instance, the process of understanding the unity of God (*tawḥīd*), that reaches its zenith through *fanāʾ*, begins with glimpses of *tawḥīd* while the wayfarer is still observing God's attributes. Through *fanāʾ*, the wayfarer experiences an identity-shift, and he sees himself as God. In other words, while mystical death and the opening of the inner sight are preliminary stages in the transformation of the consciousness, a most immediate understanding of the unity of God (*tawḥīd*) can occur at the more advanced stage of *fanāʾ*. In both cases of *mawt-i maʿnavī* (mystical death) and *fanāʾ* (annihilation), the transformed consciousness is defined as a mode of seeing. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt discusses these points at different places in his writing.[360]

> Then the beginning of unity is revealed to him. This distinguishes him from the rest because "Of the people there are some who say: 'We believe in Allah and the last day.' But they do not (really) believe."[361] His name is registered among those who "Have the assurance of the hereafter."[362] Because he is beyond those who "believe in the unseen,"[363] he has reached the world of certitude. Certitude is found in observation, and faith is found in absence and separation.

The wayfarer who arrives at this station is not among those who "believe" in the unseen through the teachings of the *Qurʾān* or the prophets. His faith is beyond belief as it is commonly understood; his faith is based on his experience of the realities of the unseen. He has obtained his faith in a special realm of consciousness that is indescribable in words. The Qurʾānic verses that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt is referring to, *al-Baqarah* (2: 3–8), describe the "believers" as those who are steadfast in religious duties. The wayfarer on the death journey is beyond performing ceremonial acts of piety. Moreover, his personal belief in the unseen involves levels of signification that are indefinable through words or teachings. For instance, the wayfarer sees and understands the unity of God through Him. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt describes this kind of belief as a state of mind and a realm of consciousness that he calls the "world of certitude" (*ʿālam-i yaqīn*). The wayfarer can reach this stage only if God desires it.

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[360] Ibid., sec. 71, p. 52.
[361] *Qurʾān*, 2: 8.
[362] Ibid., 2: 4.
[363] Ibid., 2: 3.

The unveilings of the unseen occur as different lights become discernible to the wayfarer. He sees these lights in a dualistic relationship.[364] The dualism in ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's mysticism is seen in his interpretation of the cosmos as the reflection of the contrasting lights of Muḥammad and Satan and man's understanding of the reality and the appearance. This dualistic cosmogony justifies monotheistic faith by juxtaposing the light of Muḥammad with the dark light of Satan and contrasting the enlightened with the ignorant. In this context, time and space are described as limitless extensions of luminosity in contrast to horror. Man and his destiny are explained against this contrasting background and in relation to these lights. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt explains that the creation itself, as a manifestation of God, has a dual quality. The creation has an appearance that is visible to the eye. It also has a reality that is the light of God and can be perceived with the inner sight through mystical death. One who is used to the kind of understanding that is informed by the visible world of matter cannot readily perceive the light of God in the creation. Such a person sees Muḥammad as the body and the flesh and Satan as the fallen angel who instigates sin.[365] Yet, the reality of Muḥammad and Satan is their lights that appear alongside each other and illuminate the realm of God's attributes. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt further explains that God's essence can neither be named nor qualified but can be expressed as light. In this relationship, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt defines God as the all-encompassing, non-comparable light whose emanations manifest different degrees of luminosity. These emanations constitute all of creation and make it visible. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt explains that in Arabic the verb *khalaqa* (create) has different meanings, such as "to produce" or "to determine"; however, in the context of this discussion it means to "manifest" and to make visible.[366]

The final chapter of the *Tamhīdat*, "The Lights of Muḥammad and Satan Are the Reality and the Essence of the Earth and the Sky," elaborates on this point. The title of the chapter is from the "Light" verse in the *Qurʾān*.[367] In this chapter, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt explains that God is the source of all other lights that appear in creation, but is distinct

[364] ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's mysticism finds its genesis in a complex dualism that is informed by the teachings of Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad and Aḥmad Ghazzālī.

[365] *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 217, p. 162.

[366] Ibid., sec. 348, p. 265.

[367] *Qurʾān*, 24: 35. "God is the Light of the Heaven and the Earth"

from them.[368] The non-comparable light of God escapes definition, whereas the other lights can be named, as, for instance, the light of the sun or the stars or the light of fire. These lights are metaphorical in relation to the reality of the light of God. An example of these metaphorical lights is the light of the day and the dark of the night, which in their contrasting juxtaposition reveal and conceal the light of God. In this relationship, God is predicated as light, while His essence remains undefinable. Thus, the dualism in ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's epistemology of lights points toward an understanding of God's unity (*tawḥīd*), which is exposed to the wayfarer in the state of mystical death and is experienced by him through annihilation (*fanāʾ*).

Apperception of the unseen through light is a process of cognition that different Muslim mystics have referred to in their writings and as they have discussed their personal lives. In *Sharḥ-i Shaṭḥīyyāt* (An Exegesis of Ecstatic Sayings), for instance, Rūzbihān Baqlī (A.D. 1128–1209) elaborates on the findings of a large number of mystics who have discussed their experience of the unseen. Notwithstanding the individuality and the distinct quality of this experience among the wayfarers, these mystics are reflecting on the same beloved as they see Him—a point that Aḥmad Ghazzālī in the *Sawāniḥ* alludes to as different shades of the same color.[369] At the same time, they are responding to a common intellectual tradition that adheres to an esoteric reading of the *ḥadīth* and the *Qurʾān*. This tradition, going back to the time of the Prophet himself, conceived God in light imagery. In this discussion, the "Light" verse, mentioned above, is the most frequently cited *Qurʾānic* verse.

اللّهُ نُورُ السّمٰوتِ وَالأَرضِ / مَثَلُ نُورِهِ كَمِشكَوةٍ فِيهَا مِصبَاحٌ / المِصبَاحُ فِي زُجَاجَةٍ / الزُّجَاجَةُ كَأَنّهَا كَوكَبٌ دُرّيٌّ يُوقَدُ مِن شَجَرَةٍ مُبَرَكَةٍ زَيتُونَةٍ لا شَرقِيّةٍ ولا غَربِيّةٍ / يَكَادُ زَيتُهَا يُضِيءُ وَلَولَم تَمسَسهُ نَارٌ / نُورٌ عَلَى نُورٍ يَهدِي اللّهُ لِنُورِهِ مَن يَشَاءُ / وَيَضرِبُ اللّهُ الأَمثَالَ لِلنّاس / وَاللّهُ بِكُلّ شَيءٍ عَلِيمٌ.

Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth / The parable of His Light is as if there were a Niche and within it a Lamp / The Lamp enclosed

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[368] *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 333–35, pp. 254–55.

[369] W. Montgomery Watt, *Muslim Intellectual: A Study of Al-Ghazali* (Edinburgh: the University Press, 1963), p. 56.

> in Glass / The glass as if it were a brilliant star: Lit from a blessed Tree, an Olive, neither of the East nor of the West / Whose Oil is well-nigh / Luminous, though fire scarce touched it /Light upon Light! / Allah doth set forth Parables for men:/ and Allah doth know all things.[370]

The "Light" verse compares the light of God to a brilliant lamp in a glass that is secured in a niche. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt interprets this verse explaining that the "niche" is the soul of the onlooker and the "glass" the light of Muḥammad. He defines the "lamp" as God, who is unparalleled:"He is Allāh, there is no god but him"«هُوَاللَّهُالَّذىلآإِلَهَإِلاّهُوَ».[371] It is noteworthy that in this discussion, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt refers to the uniqueness of God in the same words that Satan used when refusing to bow before Adam. Satan declared his refusal to prostrate before Adam, the creature of God, by saying that the only one who is worthy of worship is God: "There is no god except Him" (لآ إِلَهَ إلاّ هُو). Thus alluding to Satan, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt introduces him into the discussion and explains that God is light and all of creation is the emanation of the lights that God has bestowed on Muḥammad and on Satan.[372]

In his discussion on the light of God, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt refers to Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad Ghazzālī and his *Mishkāt al-Anwār* (The Niche of Lights).[373] Ghazzālī was a protégé of the famous Saljūq vizir Niẓām al-Mulk (A.D. 1017-92) and a venerated professor at the Niẓāmiyya school of Baghdād. After a long career of defending reason against esoteric interpretations of Islam, later in his life, he became sceptical of human reason in its providing satisfactory answers on the issue of faith. He now argued that true knowledge of God is revealed in the heart of the believer by God as He desires to call the believer closer. The heart refers to the feelings and the intentions of the individual. When his heart is filled with subtle spiritual emotions, this light may appear there.[374] At that point, his soul perceives the light. Ghazzālī

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[370] *Qurʾān*, 24: 35.

[371] Ibid., 44: 8, 59: 22–23.

[372] I will come back to this topic in the section *The Opaque Light of Separation*, which concerns the teachings of Aḥmad Ghazzālī and his influence on his disciple, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt.

[373] *Tamhīdāt*, p. 68. ʿAfīf ʿUsayrān argues that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt was introduced to philosophy through the writings of ʿAbū Ḥāmīd Muḥammad Ghazzālī. He further explains that a comparative analysis of *Zubdat al-Ḥaqāʾiq* and the *Tamhīdāt*, which he composed about ten years later, demonstrates that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's views on the after-life and the affairs of heaven and hell were distinct from those of ʿAbū Ḥāmīd.

[374] Ghazzālī's *Mishkāt al-Anwār* provides an epistemological and psychological study of the lights that appear in the heart of the wayfarer and inform him of the

explained, this kind of cognition is beyond words and reason. When Ghazzālī reached a spiritual crisis, he found his way out of this crisis, as he explains, through "a light that God cast into my breast." This experience of the opening of the "heart" and the shining of the light therein rescued him from his crisis. Although Ghazzālī never explained what this light was, he affirmed the inability of reason to provide a comprehensive knowledge of the truth.[375] He now vouched for an unmediated and intrinsic (*bāṭinī*) perception of God as the basis of faith.

ʿAyn al-Quḍāt pays homage to Ghazzālī and praises him for aptly describing the light of God as the true light and the agent that makes everything else, including the darkness, visible.[376] ʿAyn al-Quḍāt explains that according to Ghazzālī's definition God is the "real" light that brings everything else into being by making it visible.[377]

> Alas, *Ḥujat al-Islām*[378] Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad Ghazzālī—may God be pleased with him—describes it so well! He gave an example of this light and said: "The light means that by which the things become visible." This means, light is that without which things cannot be seen, and the darkness becomes manifest with light. If this is the meaning of light, then the real light is attributed to God and [the term light] is applied to other lights metaphorically. All the creatures of the world were non-existent and came into being by His light and His might and will. Therefore, because the being of the sky and the earth is by His might and will, "God is the light of the heaven and the earth"[379] is none other than He. Is it ever possible to see a particle in the dark? Nay. The appearance and the unveiling of the particles are contingent on the rising of the sun. If there were no sunrise, the particles could not be seen and would appear non-existent. If there were no sunrise there would be no "God is the light of the heaven and the earth," nor would the particles ever exist: "When thy Lord drew forth from the children of Adam from their loins."[380]

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unseen. David Buchman, the translator of *The Niche of Lights*, provides an excellent bibliography on this text, pp. 56–57.

[375] Ghazzālī's critique of reason as such is the subject of *The Incoherence of the Philosphers* (*Tahāfut al-Falāsifa*).

[376] *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 336, pp. 255–56.

[377] Ibid.

[378] This title means the "Proof of Islam" and is applied to the individuals who have produced definitive scholarship on the truths of Islam and the *Qurʾān*.

[379] *Qurʾān*, 24: 35.

[380] Ibid., 7: 172.

This passage from the *Tamhīdāt* appears in the beginning of the chapter, "God Is the Light of the Heaven and the Earth," named after the first line of the "Light" verse. In this chapter, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt initiates his discussion by appealing to Ghazzālī. In fact, the chapter title is a response to Ghazzālī's project in *Mishkāt al-Anwār* (The Niche of Light)—his title is also a borrowing from the "Light" verse—that Ghazzālī explains is the interpretation of the Qurʾānic verse "God is the light of the heaven and the earth." Ghazzālī's argument is to show that God is the real light in contrast to the rest of the creation, which is the manifestation of that light. In other words, God is the reality and everything else is the appearance. He explains, reflections of the light of God extend into infinite degrees of luminosity that are metaphors for the real light. The sensory world of matter (*al-ʿālam al-ḥissī*) reflects this light at a lower degree of luminosity. This world is visible to everyone while the world of dominion (*al-ʿālam al-malakūt*) is hidden from many. The visible world is a similitude of the other world and the arena for finding the way to it.[381] These parallel worlds are different spectrums of the light of God and are connected as such.[382] This is the interpretation of the verse, "God is the Light of the Heaven and the Earth." As one is approaching the unseen, flashes from its lights appear in one's heart. One's soul perceives these lights gradually. The metaphor of the niche, the lamp, the glass, the olive, and the tree stand for different stages of apprehending these lights.[383]

### *The Light of Muḥammad and the Opening of the Heart*

Significance of light among Muslim mystics is not confined to the "Light" verse or other light imagery in the *Qurʾān*. In the *ḥadīth*, Muḥammad is seen as the archetypal Prophet and the prime recipient of the light of God. Muḥammadan Light (*al-nūr al-Muḥammadī*) is considered by some Muslim mystics, like Ḥallāj and ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, as a fundamental principle in the act of creation. This light, they argue, derives from pre-existence and is an agent in setting the universe in motion.[384] The manifestation of this light in the life of Muḥammad, in

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[381] Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad Ghazzālī, *The Niche of Lights*, p. 27.

[382] Ibid., pp. 25–26.

[383] Al-Ḥallāj, "*Ṭāsīn al-Sirāj*," in *Kitāb al-Ṭawāsīn*, edited by Louis Massignon (Paris: Librairie Paul Geuthner, 1913), pp. 179–80.

[384] Louis Massignon, *The Passion of al-Hallāj:* vol. 1, pp. 131–32.

his human form, can be traced to his childhood. It was reported in tradition that when Muḥammad was a small boy, he had an encounter with Gabriel who made his heart pure in order for him to receive the knowledge of God.[385]

> Gabriel on a certain day came to the prophet of God, peace be upon him, while he was playing with the lads, and took him and threw him on the ground and opened [his breast] in order to reveal his heart and took out the heart. Then he opened the heart and removed from it a blood clot and said, this is the portion of Satan in you. Then he washed it [the heart] in a golden bowl with the water of *Zamzam*. Then he closed it up [the heart] and put it in its place. The lads ran to his mother, meaning his wet-nurse, and said, Muḥammad is killed. They came and he had no color left in him. Anas says: "Indeed I used to see the mark of the needle on his breast."[386]

The *Qurʾān* is interpreted as alluding to this event in the life of the prophet. The following verse, called *al-Sharḥa* (The Cutting Open), is often cited and discussed in this context in the mystical literature.

أَلَمْ نَشرَح لَكَ صَدرَكَ / وَوَضَعنَا عَنكَ وِزرَكَ / الَّذِی أَنقَضَ ظَهرَكَ / وَرَفَعنَا لَكَ ذِكرَكَ /

> Have we not opened your breast / And removed from it your sin / Which burdened your back / And elevated your value /[387]

Drawing on the *ḥadīth* and the *Qurʾān*, the ninth century Iranian Muslim mystic, al-Tustarī (d. 283/896) formulates certain mystical doctrines on Muḥammadan light that after him inspire many mystics, including ʿAyn al-Quḍāt. Al-Tustarī's method of interpreting the *Qurʾān* is modeled after that of the sixth shīʿi *imām*, Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. A.D. 765) who canonized the intrinsic (*bāṭinīyya*) interpretation of the *Qurʾān*.[388] Interpreting the *Qurʾān* and the *ḥadīth* in esoteric terms was a formative influence on Islamic mysticism. At the same time, this

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[385] Al-Bayhaqī, *Dalāʾil al-Nubuwwāt*, vol. 1, edited by M.ʿOthmān (Cairo: Muḥammad ʿAbdal-Muḥsin al-Kātib, 1969), pp. 293–94.

[386] Cf. Ibid. with ibn al-Hishām, *Al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya li-ibn Hishām bi Sharḥal-Wazīr al-Maghrib* (Beirut: al-Kītāb al-ʿArabī, 1993), pp. 189–90.

[387] *Qurʾān*, 94:1–4.

[388] Gerhard Bowering, *The Mystical Vision of Existence in Classical Islam: the Quranic Hermeneutics of the Sufi Sahl At-Tustari* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1980), p. 141. Bowering demonstrates the connection between al-Tustarī and Imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq's readings of the *Qurʾān*. Despite the sunni convictions of the former,

kind of interpretation provided the propaganda and the ideological background to dissident shīʿi political movements—most significantly the Ismāʿīlī shīʿis—in the following centuries.

In his commentary on the *Qurʾān*, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, al-Tustarī refers to the "Light" verse, quoted above, explaining that God in His oneness is as light and has manifested Himself in pre-existence in the light of Muḥammad.[389] Al-Tustarī further explains his position by asserting that the Muḥammadan light comes from the source of unity and oneness itself. In the realm of multiplicities, this light is revealed in the body of Muḥammad, who is perceived as the congealing of the light in the flesh, as the harbinger of truth, and as the man who comports himself in that light. The affinity between God and Muḥammad is intimate and fierce: their relationship involves not only Muḥammad's consciousness but also his flesh. The physicality of their intimacy, the "cutting open" of his breast, removing the "share" of Satan from it, as well as expressions of God's affection for Muḥammad, are just a few examples.

The significance of Muḥammad and the Muḥammadan light is discussed in detail by al-Tustarī's disciple, the tenth-century mystic-martyr, al-Ḥallāj. In his *Kitāb al-Ṭawāsīn*, he describes Muḥammad as follows:[390]

> 2) He opened his heart, and elevated his rank, made his command mandatory, and caused his full moon to appear; his full moon rose from the clouds of Yamāma and his sun dawned in the direction of Tihāma, and his lamp shone in the mine of generosity.

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Bowering argues that al-Tustarī is highly influenced by the shīʿī leader. The following is Bowering's discussion on this subject as recorded by Sulamī in *Ḥaqāʾiq al-Tafsīr*:

> Tustari's method of Qurʾanic interpretation apparently follows the precedent set by Gafar As-Sadiq (d. A.D.765), who is also on record with a statement concerning a four point pattern of Qurʾanic exegesis; but actually, in his commentary on the Quran, applies two ways of interpretation, a literal (*zahir*) and a spiritual (*batin*) way, and stresses the hidden meaning (*batin*) of Qurʾanic verses. Gafar As-Sadiqʾs pattern can also be understood as a dual two-point pattern: on the one hand composed of *ʿibarah*, the literal expression of a verse, and *isharah*, its allegorical allusion, and on the other hand including *lataʾif*, the mystical subtleties, and *haqaʾiq*, the spiritual realities. While the pair of *ʿibarah* and *isharah* is related to the distinction between common man (*ʿawamm*) and mystic man (*khwass*), the *lataʾif* and *haqaʾiq* are perceived in analogy with the saints (*auliyaʾ*) and the prophets (*anbiyaʾ*).

[389] Ibid., pp. 149–52.

[390] Al-Ḥallāj *"Ṭāsīn al-Sirāj,"* in *Kitāb al-Ṭawāsīn*, pp. 10–11.

> 3) He did not inform except through his insight, and he did not command his *sunna* except by the truth of his conduct; he was present and he caused [others] to become present; he saw and informed; he was guided and determined.
>
> 4) No one saw him as he truly was except for [ʿAbū Bakr] al-Siddīq, because he was in accordance with him and accompanied him that there might remain no separation between them.
>
> 5) Gnostics who knew him described him ignorantly. "And those to whom we brought the book, they know it as they know their own sons. And there is a sect who keeps silent about the truth, although they know it."
>
> 6) The lights of prophecy project from his light; and their lights appear out of his light. And in all the lights there is none more luminous, more evident, and more ancient with regard to ancientness, except the Author of Generosity.

The Prophet Muḥammad is the manifestation of the truth (*al-ḥaqq*) and an expression of God's ipseity.[391] Therefore, he could say "I am the truth" (*ana al-ḥaqq*), but he refrained from saying it because that would had been blasphemy; God is the only one who can proclaim Himself as the truth. The truth in Muḥammad is manifested in his teachings and in his way of life (*sunna*). In order for the truth to become visible, it has to be seen, understood, and confirmed (*ṣadaqa*) by one who accepts it.[392] Such a person is, in effect, an intimate of God, since he can partake of the Muḥammadan light. In the passage cited above, ʿAbū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, who accompanied Muḥammad in his nocturnal *hijrah* (migration to Madīna), is named as an example of such an intimate. Ḥallāj's reference to ʿAbū Bakr is to underscore his spiritual kinship with Muḥammad and his light. It is in this context that Ḥallāj alludes to their exile and their solitude (*ghurba*) in the cave of the *hijra* where they meditated on God in their shared seclusion.[393] Their intimate recognition of one another as kindred spirits is a trope for the intimacy between Muḥammad and other prophets.

Muḥammadan light is the source of emanation for the lights of other prophets. Mystics like Ḥallāj, Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī Ḥakīm Tirmidhī (d. A.D. 936/938), Aḥmad Ghazzālī, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, Rūzbihān Baqlī, and Najm al-Dīn Kubrā include saints and

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[391] Louis Massignon, *The Passion of al-Hallāj*, vol. 1, pp. 131–32.

[392] Ibid., pp. 216–18.

[393] Ibid., vol. 2, pp. 58–59. See this reference for a discusssion on the psychological ramifications of the term *anā al-ḥaqq*.

mystics into the ranks of those who are allotted the light of Muḥammad and who can identify with the truth. Ḥallāj is one who proclaims this identification openly by saying "I am the truth" (*ana al-ḥaqq*); ʿAyn al-Quḍāt is accused of claiming that he is the truth. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt understands Muḥammadan light as a form of gnosis that represents the unity of God. In the *Tamhīdāt*, he elaborates on this subject in numerous places. In fact, the *Tamhīdāt* opens with reference to the significance of Muḥammadan light. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt approaches this topic by differentiating between acquired knowledge and knowledge by proximity and thus sets the tone of his discussion:[394]

> O dear, I say: have you not heard or seen this verse in the *Qurʾān* "Indeed there has come to you from God a light and a lucid book"?[395] It calls Muḥammad light, and the *Qurʾān*, which is the word of God, light and "Follow the light that was sent down with him."[396]

ʿAyn al-Quḍāt then makes an analogy between the intrinsic and the extrinsic (*ẓāhirīyya wa bāṭinīyya*) qualities of knowledge, *Qurʾān*, and Muḥammad. Next, he asserts his own stance in relation to the apparent and the hidden aspects of reality. He describes himself as a person of insight and truth (*baṣīrat wa ḥaqīqat*) since he can perceive the reality of Muḥammad, as light, with his own heart and soul.[397] This kind of esoteric understanding is akin to the one described by Ḥallāj, in the passage quoted above, when he states:

> No one saw him as he truly was except for [ʿAbū Bakr] al-Siddīq, because he was in accordance with him and accompanied him that there might remain no separation between them.

Ḥallāj is referring to the understanding between ʿAbū Bakr and Muḥammad on the one hand and between Muḥammad and God, on the other. The relationship between God and Muḥammad is one of understanding between two likenesses. In this relationship mysteries are revealed to Muḥammad by "Mystery Itself."[398] The medium of unveiling mysteries of the unseen world (*ghayb*) to Muḥammad is light. Those who can understand the light of Muḥammad can, in effect, understand the first expression of the light of God. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and others who have spoken on this subject have understood Muḥammad

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[394] *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 2, p. 2.
[395] *Qurʾān*, 5: 15.
[396] Ibid., 7: 157.
[397] *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 2, p. 2.
[398] Bowering, *The Mystical Vision*, pp. 150–51.

as light in the visible world of matter. For them, Muḥammad's message has been to point to the unseen by being the proof of the light from that realm. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt describes gnosis as such in an epistemology of lights whose intent, as he declares in the beginning of the *Tamhīdāt*, is to confirm that there is a hidden truth to every aspect of life and death.[399]

> But the intent is for you to know that besides this humanity, there is another reality, and besides this appearance, another meaning; besides this body, another soul and brain, and besides this world another world.
>
> There is another world to us besides this
> There is another place besides heaven and hell
> The emancipated is alive by another soul
> His pure essence, from another mine
> Intoxication and recklessness are love's endowments
> Sermon and abstinence are another world
> They tell us, this is another sign
> Since there is another tongue beside this

The implications of this knowledge is to "see" in another "light." ʿAyn al-Quḍāt explains that the wayfarer understands the reality past appearances as he ventures through the gate of mysteries (death) and beyond what lies therein: "If you set out, you arrive, and you see."[400] The one on the "journey" is the one who is traversing his heart: the wayfarer who sees the light in his breast, experiences the gradual opening of the inner sight *(infitāḥ ʿayn al-baṣīra*) and is acquainted with the world of mysteries. He refers to his acquired knowledge in terms of the opening of the eye of insight. In *Zubdat al-Ḥaqāʾiq* under the heading "*al-Shurūṭ al-Lāzima li-Infitāḥ ʿAyn al-Baṣīra*" (The Necessary Conditions for the Opening of the Eye of Insight) he gives the following explanation:[401]

> If you are a seeker, it befits you to ponder thoroughly, with an efficacious gaze, the prerequisites of faith in the unseen that I have imposed upon you. Turn your attention to it over and over again until your assent becomes your nature. This having taken place, you will not need to look at the preliminaries; so that your nature will become quite apt for a light from God—Almighty—to flow over it. A light which yields opening of

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399 *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 5, p. 4.
400 Ibid., sec. 19, p. 13; cf. *Maktūbāt*, vol. 2, Letter 3, pp 97–104.
401 *Zubdat al-Ḥaqāʾiq*, p. 92.

> the heart and expansiveness of the crop. As God—praise be to Him the most exalted—has said: "He whose heart Allah has opened to Islam, he is in a state of light from his Lord."[402] Know that what causes your heart to open to faith in the unseen so there flows over your nature a light the like of which you have never before seen, is a sign from among the effects of the state that appears after the state of reason. Gather your might in seeking; that suffices you in finding. And whoever seeks and strives, shall.

Accordingly, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt describes the activity of seeing as distancing one's self from the appearances and as unlearning the givens of faith.[403] And yet, to set one's self in motion, to go, to arrive, and to see, is indeed a mystery. The heart is the locus where this mystery unfolds. The mystic who has dared to tear away from the security of conventions and habits and has dared to let his heart be opened to this light, comes to see his self as light. This occurrence brings one in touch with the lights that make up his being and the lights that constitute the created world: the lights of Muḥammad and Satan.

Other Muslim mystics have also defined the experience of the "opening of the heart" and the "dawning of light" within. Among those, Ḥakīm Tirmidhī describes this experience as a Gestalt in his mystical growth. In the autobiographical prelude to *Kitāb Khatm al-Awliyāʾ*, Tirmidhī explains how after steadfast prayers and supplications, one night as he was returning home from a recitation gathering he was overcome by the sudden opening of his heart.[404]

> When a certain amount of the night had passed, I set out for home. Along the way, my heart [suddenly] became open in a manner which I am unable to describe. It was as if something happened in my heart and I became happy and took delight in it. I felt joyful as I walked on, and nothing that I met with caused me fear, not even the dogs that barked at me. I liked their barking because of a pleasure I experienced in my heart ... until the sky with its stars and its moon came down close to the earth. And while this was taking place, I invoked my Lord. I felt as if something was made upright in my heart, and when I experienced this sweetness, my interior twisted itself and contracted, and one part of it was twisted over the other because of the force of the pleasure and it was pressed together. This sweetness spread through my loins and

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[402] *Qurʾān*, 39: 22.

[403] *Maktūbāt*, vol. 2, Letter 3, pp. 102–3.

[404] ʿAlī Tirmidhī, *Kitāb Khatm al-Awliyāʾ*, edited by ʿUthman I. Yaḥyā (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1965) sec. 7, p. 19.

> through my veins. It seemed to me that I was close to the location of God's Throne (*makān al-ʿarsh*). And this remained my practice every night until morning. I stayed awake at night and didn't sleep. Meanwhile, my heart became strong through this. But I was bewildered (*mutaḥayyir*) and didn't know what this was. None the less, my strength and my zeal increased in whatever I undertook.[405]

In his autobiography, Tirmidhī hesitates to probe this event any further. His refraining may be due to allegations of heresy made against him: a subject he tactfully hints at in the passage immediately following the one quoted above, as he refers to his adversaries and their schemes against him.[406] In his mystical works, *Sīrat al-Awliyāʾ* and *Bayān al-Fārq bayn al-Ṣadr wa al-Qalb wa al-Fuʾād wa al-Lubb*, Tirmidhī discusses an elaborate epistemology on the subject of the heart and the light within.[407] In the passage below, for instance, he categorizes human beings according to their capacity for understanding God and the illumination of the light of gnosis in their hearts.[408]

> Common men's allotments from amongst God's attributes consist of their belief in His attributes, whereas the allotments of those traveling a middle road and of the generality of the Friends who are close to God consist of their breasts being laid open by this belief and their attaining the illumination of knowledge of these attributes in their breasts, each one of them according to his capacity and the capacity of the light of his heart. But the allotments of those who hear supernatural speech, they being the chosen few for the Friends of God, consists of [their] beholding these attributes and of the light of these attributes. For this reason he declared [57/3]: "He [God] is the outer and the inner." And is the outer anything other than what appears unto hearts? For verily,

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[405] Bernd Radtke and John O'Kane, *The Concept of Sainthood in Early Islamic Mysticism* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1996), pp. 21–22.

[406] Tirmidhī, *Sīrāt al-awliyā*, edited by Bernd Radtke (Beirut: Franz Steiner Stuttgart, 1992), sec. 8–9, pp. 19–20.

[407] Bernd Radtke, *Al-Hakim at-Tirmidi: Ein islamischer Theosoph des 3./9. Jahrhunderts* (Freiburg: Klaus Schwarz, 1980), p. 70.

> The division of the organs of the heart into *qalb*, *fuʾad*, and *ṣadr*, is the one most frequently found in Tirmizi. Furthermore, there are two other systems, each of which appears in just one of Tirmidhi's works. In *Farq*, he describes the heart as a fourfold organ: the most external part is *sadr* to which are inwardly liked *qalb*, *fuʾād* and *lubb* (the nucleus of the heart) are linked. In his system, consequently, *fuʾād* lies within and *qalb* is located outside. The spiritual functions of these organs are: islam for *sadr* (*Farq* 35, 2), *imān* (faith) for *qalb* (*Farq* 36, 9), *maʿrifa* (gnosis) for *fuʾād* (*Farq* 38, 4) and *tawḥid* (monotheism) for *lubb* (*Farq* 38, 4).

[408] Tirmidhī, *Sīrāt al-Awliyāʾ*, sec. 54, p. 37.

> God appears in His attributes unto the hearts of His elite Friends. But when the attributes come to an end, the Friend reaches the inner which is not subject to being "known". Then the heart at last takes up a settled position. And when he knows there is no attribute beyond this and he finds a position there, he knows there is no position beyond this one.[409]

Tirmidhī describes the light of gnosis (*nūr al-maʿrifa*) as one's share of faith in pre-eternity, the understanding of God's attributes, and the potential for approaching the unknown beyond the realm of attributes.[410] He explains that God's gnosis has an intrinsic (*bāṭinīyya*) and an extrinsic (*ẓāhirīyya*) quality. The intrinsic knowledge of God is unfathomable but the knowledge that is initially attained by the believer is the knowledge of God's attributes that belongs to the extrinsic manifestations of God. This kind of knowledge signals to hidden meanings beyond itself.

In a similar manner, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt describes the appearance of the light in his heart as a turning point in his spiritual growth. He recalls this experience as the beginnings of his real initiation into knowledge by proximity. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt refers to this event in the context of his meeting with his mentor, Aḥmad Ghazzālī, on his trip to Hamadhān from his hometown Qazwīn.[411] Aḥmad Ghazzālī determined a new orientation in his life. In *Zubdat al-Ḥaqāʾiq*, he highlights the formative role Aḥmad Ghazzālī played in his mystical development. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt describes meeting his teacher as a divine gift from God. He received mystical teachings from Aḥmad, which he followed diligently until his heart was purged from the "blameworthy qualities that are difficult, or rather impossible, to be rid of."[412] The purification of his heart led to the escape from the confusions that had dominated his soul. These confusions, which had become rooted inside him, were created by studying rational sciences and expecting to find his deliverance through reason. Therefore, he had become imprisoned in the confines of knowledge and reason and incapable of seeing the obscure realities of the unseen. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt considered their meeting a revival that rescued him from the spiritual crisis he was grappling

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[409] Radtke, *The Concept of Sainthood in Early Islamic Mysticism*, sec. 54, p. 98.

[410] Ibid., sec. 54, p. 98. Radtke argues that there are different degrees of experiencing gnosis. The intensity of the experience varies among different individuals depending on their success in overcoming the dominance of the carnal soul and their share of the light of God in pre-eternity.

[411] Ibn Khurdādbih, *Al-Masālik wa al-Mamālik*, p. 12. The distance between Hamadān and Qazwīn was 40 leagues (*farsang*) or 240 kilometers.

[412] *Zubdat al-Ḥaqāʾiq*, sec. 68, p. 72.

with at the time. Their meeting facilitated the comprehension of the mystical "event" (*wāqiʿa*) that he described as the opening of the inner sight and the visions of the unseen. He felt indebted to his mentor and described the experience as follows:[413]

> And while I was setting my encampment on the ground and making the camels kneel that they might recuperate from travel and the night journey, lo and behold my eyes of insight started opening, and I do not mean the insight of reason, lest you be seduced by your mind. The mind's eye was opening little by little; and in the midst of this I was occupying myself with fleeting birds that were almost blocking my way to seeking what lies beyond the rational sciences. I remained in this condition for about a year and I not yet having comprehended the real nature of the event that had befallen me in this year. Until my lord and master, the elder, his eminence, sovereign of the path and the revealer of truth, ʾAb al-Futūḥ Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Ghazzālī, may God rejoice the people of faith by his longevity and reward him on my behalf with the best of rewards—good fortune brought him to Hamadhān which is my place of origin. And in his service, the veil of perplexity was lifted from the face of this event in less than twenty days. Thus I saw everything clearly. Then something dawned on me: nothing was allowed to remain of me and my quest except what God desired. And now for years I have had no occupation except seeking to be annihilated in this thing; and God is the source of help in completing what I have turned my face toward.

Here, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt describes the gradual opening of the eye of insight as an event that takes place in a special realm of experience. In this state, he experiences a light that issues from his heart and enables him to accost the consciousness of God. He perceives that the knowledge of God does not resemble the knowledge of the created things. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt explains that prior to his meeting with Aḥmad Ghazzālī, he was facing dilemmas resulting from his inability to understand, through reason, the mystical event he had experienced ("And in his service, the veil of perplexity was lifted from the face of this event in less than twenty days"). There are no other references to the meeting with Ghazzālī in his writings and their correspondence. In the introduction to the *Tamhīdāt*, ʿAfīf ʿUsayrān tries to explain what might have happened during their meeting by evaluating how ʿAyn al-Quḍāt uses the term event (*wāqiʿa*) in his writings.[414] ʿUsayrān notes

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[413] Ibid., p. 7.

[414] *Tamhīdāt*, pp. 52–56. Considering Hamadānī's different uses of the term "event" (*Wāqiʿa*), ʿAfīf ʿUsayrān speculates that in the present context, Hamadānī is

that in the *Tamhīdāt* this word is used in reference to the relationship between the wayfarer and the shaykh, an emotional state, annihilation (*fanāʾ*), and visions of the unseen (*ghayb*). It is not clear which one of these meanings could had been ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's intent when he described his meeting with Ghazzāli. However, he does explain that reason had delivered his inquisitive mind to certain thresholds of understanding that had proved insufficient and unsatisfactory: his mind failed him in understanding the mystery of the opening of his inner sight. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt was bewildered and saw himself as a "restless dweller on murky grounds"; he was unsettled and ready to continue on with a journey that was vague and obscure. This state of confusion was produced as a consequence of his attempts to understand and define the opening of the inner sight.

He uses the familiar analogy of poetic aptitude to describe his dilemma.[415] He compares insight with the aptitude for composing poetry and explains that in the beginning, one does not need to know the technical details of prosody in order to be ale to distinguish between rhymed and unrhymed poetry. In a similar manner, insight does not need to know the distinctions between the visions that are true and those that are illusive and false. The mind of the speculative thinker feels the urge to make these distinctions but is restricted by the insufficiency of reason. Throughout this discussion, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt is describing an identity shift that affects not only his perception of himself but his perception of God and the creation—clearly, the meeting with Ghazzālī was decisive in the initiation of this process. In fact, he declares that it is only after the appearance of the light and its perception by the wayfarer that he is able to acquire faith in the pre-eternal attributes.[416] He explains that the mind cannot encompass pre-eternal knowledge unless the eye of insight is opened. The relation of reason to this eye is like the rays of the sun to the sun. And the shortcomings of the mind in understanding the intelligibles that are the properties of this eye resemble the shortcoming of fancy in understanding the perceptions of reason. "Whoever attains in his interior a necessary assent, in which there is no doubt—that the absolute abundance (*akthar al-muṭlaq*) and the absolute paucity (*qalīl al-muṭlaq*) in regards to the knowledge of God are without any

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referring to "willful annihilation" or the event that befalls the heart and settles there.

[415] *Zubdat al-Ḥaqāʾiq*, sec. 18, p. 28.

[416] Ibid., p. 26.

difference—then let him be certain that the eye of gnosis has opened up in his inside. He will become the spring that is close to matters that are similar to these instances of wisdom."[417] One will understand such paradoxes because one is close to their source; this is the meaning of knowledge by proximity to God (*al-ʿilm al-ladunnī*). ʿAyn al-Quḍāt warns the wayfarer to be cautious against the impurities that can blur his vision. He compares this eye to the earth and says: "Know that the relation of these events to the eye of gnosis is like the relation of the events that befall the earth and annul its capacity to receive the flowing of the light of the sun."

He is discussing an alternative cognitive process, which before meeting his mentor he was unable to grasp and come to terms with. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt explains that after this event he was uncertain about how he could process the visions. He says: "I was occupying myself with fleeting birds that were almost blocking my way to seeking what lies beyond the rational sciences." In reverting to the familiar modes of cognition, he was in effect becoming his own hurdle in attaining gnosis. Suddenly, Aḥmad Ghazzālī appeared in his life and the guiding light of his destiny permeated his heart, filling his bosom with the rhythms of an entirely new angst. The mystical teachings of Ghazzālī had saved ʿAyn al-Quḍāt from the intellectual impasse he was in.

### *The Opaque Light of Separation*

ʿAḥmad Ghazzālī unraveled the event that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt refers to in the beginning of *Zubdat al-Ḥaqāʾiq*. He also played a fundamental role in the intellectual life of his young disciple. Ghazzālī's teachings on love and on Satan had a formative influence on ʿAyn al-Quḍāt. Inspired by these teachings, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt perceived Satan not as evil but as an obscure light that appears in contrast with Muḥammad's luminosity.[418] ʿAyn al-Quḍāt explains that in the realm of God's attributes there are two lights: the sunlight and the moon light. These two lights come into view juxtaposed against each other. Sunlight is the "shadow" of God, and moonlight the "shadow" of the sun.[419] One comes from the day

[417] Ibid., sec. 18, p. 28.

[418] This understanding is at odds with the *sharīʿa*, which perceives Muḥammad as a member of the *Quraysh* tribe who was chosen by God as the prophet, and perceives Satan as the embodiment of evil and sin.

[419] *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 333–470, pp. 254–354.

and one from the night, but in that realm there is neither day nor night. The metaphorical lights of the visible world correspond to the lights of the unseen: the sunlight comes from the Prophet Muḥammad and the moonlight from Satan. The light of Satan, God's dejected lover, is compared to moonlight that can only come into view if there is a sun in its orbit that makes it visible.

Ghazzālī and ʿAyn al-Quḍāt evaluate Satan as a creature of light and as the paradigm lover-in-separation who ponders the inscrutable will of God.[420] In spite of his proximity to God, Satan failed to understand His will (*irāda*) through His command (*amr*). The story of Satan, thus, points to the will of God as the unknowable. His tragedy was his ignorance in his relationship with God. Satan's plight is to demonstrate that (1) God's will is unfathomable, and (2) the state of intimacy between God and His lover is fraught with illusion and misunderstanding. These findings convey the quality of the knowledge that can or cannot be reached apropos God (*al-ʿilm al-ladunnī*).

Evaluating Satan as a tragic personality is a familiar theme that others, including al-Ḥallāj (d. 922) and Sanāʾī Ghaznawī (d. 1131), have discussed. The following poem by Sanāʾī describes Satan's predicament in his own lamenting voice.

with Him my heart was united in love and friendship;
my heart was nest to the Simurgh of love.
At my gate stood an army from the hosts of angels;
my rank was to be stationed by the Divine Throne.
But upon my path He laid the trap of His wiliness;
Adam was the bait in the middle of that trap.
He willed to make me the butt of His curse;
He effected what He willed; clay Adam was but the pretext.
I was the teacher of the angels in the heavens;
I set my hope in eternity on this Eternal One.
I have passed seven hundred thousand years in obedient worship;
thousands upon thousands of treasures were amassed from my obedience.
I had read upon the tablet that someone would be cursed;
I was suspicious of everyone; I didn't suspect myself.
Adam was created of clay, and I, from His pure light.

[420] Satan refused God's order to prostrate before Adam and was therefore condemned to separation from the beloved (God).

> I cried, "I am incomparable!"—and he was the incomparable.
> The angels said, "You did not bow even once."
> How could I have done it, for He had this laid out for me.
> Come, O soul, and do not depend on your obedient deeds,
> for this verse is meant to give insight to people of the present.
> I understood the end to which we had come because of His decree.
> Thereupon a hundred fountains flowed from my two eyes.
> O you who are wise in the ways of love, I am sinless!
> For (my) finding the way to their (Adam and Eve) side was not without leave.[421]

Satan explains that he was created from God's pure light; therefore, he did not follow the command of God because he considered himself superior to the clay-made Adam. However, his pride was not the real reason for his downfall: his refusal to prostrate before Adam was beyond his own volition, because he was destined by God to disobey His command ("I had read upon the tablet that someone would be cursed / I was suspicious of everyone; I didn't suspect myself."). According to this perspective, Satan was a victim in God's plan to demonstrate His mystery and to show that His will is incomprehensible by any one but Him. Satan concludes by saying that his fall was planned to teach others about God's ways.

Al-Ḥallāj speaks extensively about Satan. In *Ṭāsīn al-Azal wa al-Iltibās*, through a theatrical presentation of Satan, he elaborates the impossibility of understanding God's intents.[422] The following dialogue between Satan and God is an example of their dramatic altercations. Here, Satan is asserting God's unity as he insists on his own individuality (*fardānīya*).[423]

> He was damned as he reached individuation and was turned away as he sought singularity. / He [God] told him, "Prostrate!" He said, "[Before] no one but you!" He said, "Even if I cast my condemnation upon you?" He said, "Nothing except that! / I cannot follow anyone else except you. I am a wretched lover." He said, "You are arrogant." He said: "If I had [spent only] a moment with you, pride and haughtiness would be fitting for me; but I am the one who knew you in eternity. I am better than he."

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[421] Sanā'ī Ghaznawī, *Dīwān*, in Peter J. Awn, *Satan's Tragedy and Redemption: Iblīs in Sufi Psychology*, (Leiden: Brill, 1983), pp. 173–74.

[422] Al-Ḥallāj, "Ṭāsīn al-Azal wa al-Iltibās" in *Kitāb al-Ṭawāsīn*, pp. 41–56.

[423] Ibid., pp. 43–44.

Ironically, in sheer ignorance of God's will (*irāda)* Satan boasts about his knowledge of God ("I am the one who knew you in eternity. I am better than he."). Rūzbihān Baqlī's interpretation of this episode is that al-Ḥallāj is describing how Satan was not possessed of the "understanding of the understanding" (*fahm-i fahm*) and did not see the pre-eternal oneness of God in the creation.[424] Instead, he retreated into himself and saw a distinction between the creature and God. Consequently, he vouched for the Oneness of God from the perspective of division. Rūzbihān further explains that the other participant in this relationship is Muḥammad, who is asked by God to look at the proceedings between Satan and Adam. Muḥammad also refuses God's command (*amr*) and does not look at them. Instead, he looks within himself and sees the beloved, and looks into the beloved and sees himself. Muḥammad also makes a distinction between himself and God, but in his case, the distinction between the lover and the beloved is a union. Muḥammad finds God inside his heart and worships his own heart, whereas Satan looks at Adam and does not see God but sees his own love.

Following the tradition that considers Satan as a tragic character, Ghazzālī and ʿAyn al-Quḍāt perceive him as the counterpart for Muḥammad and see his state of separation or misunderstanding as a condition of knowledge.[425] They see separation as a mystical state that can lead the wayfarer to the presence of God, where he can attain the most intimate level of knowledge by proximity (*al-ʿilm al-ladunnī*). In *ʿAynīyah,*[426] a personal letter to ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, Ghazzālī refers to separation and union, the plight of Satan, death, vision and the Doomsday as follows:[427]

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[424] Baqlī, *Sharḥ-i Shaṭḥīyyāt*, pp. 508–9.

[425] Human beings bear the traits of Satan. Therefore, the knowing mystic deals with this condition of his humanity consciously. The proclamation of infidelity, in contrast to following a faith blindly, is a necessary progress in addressing the influence of Satan in one's life. See, Leonard Lewisohn, "In Quest of Annihilation: Imaginalization and Mystical Death in the Tamhīdāt of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadhānī," pp. 312–16.

[426] Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt al-Uns*, sec. 456, p. 475. Jāmī refers to the degree of intimacy between ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and his teacher, Aḥmad Ghazzālī, explaining that they wrote many letters to each other. Among those, he explains, is *ʿAynīyah*, cf. Aḥmad Ghazzālī, *Majmūʿih-yi Āthār-i Fārsī-yi Aḥmad-i Ghazzālī*, 3rd ed; edited by Aḥmad Mūjāhid (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Dānishgāh-i Tehran, 1997), pp. 176–214 and 215–48; henceforth cited as Ghazzālī, *Majmūʿih-yi Āthār*.

[427] Ghazzālī, *Majmūʿih-yi Āthār*, p. 193.

> For us, the best state of intimacy is
> when the barrier comes between us
>
> You think to yourself and come out victorious! [If you can] be "Any moving object in space is moved [to a destination]" until judgement comes and they show that the creatures are all in the dark; its morning is death. Unveilings are on the Doomsday and illuminations in heaven.
>
> "Even if the veil is removed, that will not increase my certainty" is the claim of the ones who dwell in the day. To see *lā* (no) in "And the night as it dissipates"[428] and to see "And the dawn as it breathes away the darkness"[429] in *illā* (except) can be done by one possessed of insight. One who is strange from "I" and familiar with "he."

Ghazzālī warns ʿAyn al-Quḍāt that Satan was deluded by his love for God and insisted on his negative assertion of the unity of God, "There is no god but God" (*lā ilāha illā allāh*). He was thus condemned to separation and banned from seeing the beloved. In the *ʿAynīyah*, Ghazzālī continues the discussion with ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and further explains that mystery and separation can lead the wayfarer to the tremendous and the cataclysmic Doomsday. Ghazzālī describes this by juxtaposing the words of Satan with the *Qurʾān*.[430] He interprets the events of Doomsday as the unfolding of the individual's heart on the day when mysteries are revealed. The plot in his narrative takes the reader to Muḥammad and all the other wayfarers who look into their own hearts, witness their own Doomsday, and see God. Muḥammad understood God's command when He said "Look!", Muḥammad diverted his gaze away from Satan as he was refusing the command of God, and instead looked into his own heart. Therefore, he referred to God as the *muqallib al-qulūb* (the one who handles the hearts).[431] The heart of man contains both the satanic and the divine attributes and must be cleansed in order to reflect the image of love.[432] It is in this context that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt recalls the following verse by his teacher Aḥmad Ghazzālī:[433]

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[428] *Qurʾān*, 81: 17.

[429] Ibid., 81: 18.

[430] He is citing *Al-Takwīr* (The Folding Up), an early verse that describes the events of the Day of Judgement.

[431] Baqlī, *Sharḥ-i Shaṭḥīyyāt*, pp. 509–10.

[432] *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 252, p. 195.

[433] Ibid., p. 281. Emphasizing the significance of his relationship with his shaykh and mentor, Aḥmad al-Ghazzālī (d. A.H. 520–A.D. 1126), Hamadhānī cites this poem by al-Ghazzālī while interpreting the *ḥadīth* "the believer is the mirror of the believer."

O God, the mirror of your beauty is this heart.
Our soul is rose petal and your love like the nightingale.
In the beauty of your light I see myself without a self
Thus in this world every one's intent is he himself.

In the writings of Aḥmad Ghazzālī and ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, the fall of Satan conveys a consciousness that is closely related to the state of the wayfarer on the mystical path.[434] In the *Sawāniḥ*, Ghazzālī describes the unseen (*ghayb*) and the dynamics of separation and union through a psychological analysis of love.[435] He describes love as a process of transcendence and annihilation whereby the lover/wayfarer perceives the truth (*ḥaqīqa*) and the understanding of unity (*maʿrifat al-tawḥīd*) through his altercations with the beloved/God and by means of separation (*firāq*) and union (*wiṣāl*). He describes separation as a mode of understanding that inspires the beloved to remain undistracted from seeking after *ḥaqīqa*. The reality of separation and union is grasped when the lover perceives that he himself belongs in the all-encompassing design of love. Then he comes to realize that his way to himself is through love. Ghazzālī explains this in his allegorical portrayal of annihilation and rebirth of consciousness in relation to the gradual transformation of the self from subject, to knowing subject, and finally to knowing, creating subject. According to this doctrine, the most exalted moment of the transmutation of the consciousness occurs in an unanticipated visionary instant, which is not achieved by means of discursive reasoning. The instant itself is not time as measured and emitted by the three-fold extensions. Ghazzālī communicates this in reference to love.[436]

> The secret why love never reveals itself entirely to any one is that it is the bird of pre-eternity; when it has come here, it has come as the voyager of eternity. Here, it does not show its face to young men since not just any abode is worthy of its alighting. It has had its nesting from

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[434] In their own individual style, they each describe how the unseen comes into view through the trials and the tribulations that the wayfarer/lover must experience in his pursuit of love and the beloved. In the complex dynamics that govern the relationship among the lover, the beloved, and love, separation is described as lack of sight or the lover's inability to see the beloved.

[435] For Ghazzālī, love is the truth (*ḥaqīqa)* and the essence of the One. The truth, in this context, is not a fixed concept outside and above the individual; it is to be found in the heart as the individual comes in touch with himself, his own emotions, and his understanding of love through separation (*firāq*) and union (*wiṣāl*).

[436] Aḥmad Ghazzālī, *Sawāniḥ*, edited by Helmut Ritter (Tehran: Markaz-e Nashr-e Daneshgahi, 1990), pp. 22–23; henceforth cited as *Sawāniḥ*.

> the glory of pre-eternity. Every now and then it flies away from eternity and hides into the disguise of its own might and glory. And it has never revealed completely the visage of beauty to the sight of knowledge, nor shall it ever do that.
>
> When one is emancipated from worldly attachments and longings and the concerns of science and the geometry of fancy and the philosophy of imagination and the inquisition of the senses, then love sees one's worth of covenant; and that is the secret.

Ghazzālī further reflects on love, which he regards as the essence of unity (*tawḥīd)* and one's understanding of unity (*maʿrifat al-tawḥīd*), through his sublime conception of separation and union.

> To be self-constituted is one thing and to be brought in to being by the beloved is something else. To be self-constituted is the rawness of love. On the path, maturity does not come by self; when one is rid of the self then he arrives at the beloved. At this point, he arrives at the beloved through the beloved.
>
> Here annihilation becomes the *qiblah* of permanence. And the person who prevails to the abode of the beloved, yearning like a moth, joins annihilation from the threshold of permanence. This cannot be contained in simple discourse except through symbols. Perhaps the following verses that I composed during my youth, will testify to this meaning:
>
> As long as sagacity and the crystal ball are in my hands,
> The highest firmament is my inferior.
> As long as the *qiblah* of annihilation is the *qiblah* of my being,
> The most sober creatures of the world are my intoxicated.
>
> "This is my Lord," "I am the truth," and "Praise be to me," are all hues of this changing color and are far from particular settings.

Ghazzālī explains that the lover, motivated by love, pursues the beloved and in this process experiences unity. In this relationship, the lover and the beloved identify with each other to the degree that the extendings of love and the self come into view. Ghazzālī explains that at last the fateful instant of recognition arrives: "Along the path of the journey there is an astounding moment when the lover comes to meet himself."[437] At this juncture, love has brought out into the open all the inhibitions, fears, and breedings, devouring them, gnawing on the

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[437] Ibid., pp. 73–74.

lover from within, leaving him emptied inside, bewildered with the need for a new sense of himself.[438]

> There is a dazzling step in love, whereby the man in love envisions his self, because the transitory self becomes the vehicle of the beloved, since she dwells in the heart, and the self gains her color from the heart. It is here that man turns his face unto himself and is heedless of the world without, to the degree that it could be that [if the beloved arrives he cannot bear her from the terror induced by the self]. If the beloved keeps him occupied from his self he cannot endure that, since this vision of the self contains a peace that removes the heaviness, seeing the beloved adds heaviness and her intrigues overshadow him. If sustenance appears from within, it bears tranquility, but it is more difficult to bear the burden of the beloved's charms.

This cathartic process unfolds within a more intimate chamber of the heart, wherein the reckless self is being dominated by the beloved, and has become her vehicle. At this stage, Ghazzālī explains that the lover is no longer concerned with the outside: his vision is totally diverted within, where he observes his own self parading before him. The intent of this hidden side is to resist the new harmony dawning in the heart and to safeguard the familiar order of affairs: first, wishing to seduce the lover away from the beloved; and then, falling into a struggle with her, for claiming the heart. The person of the lover, it thus appears, so identifies with this untamed self, considering him so much of himself, that he is unable to bear facing the beloved, the one who is aware of this vision, and who is a participant in this battle. These discoveries, the author reminds us, are not sporadic instances that have occurred to the selected few; they are different shades of the same truth that are experienced by many wayfarers on the mystical path. Striving toward unity, the lover experiences his self, his desires, and the beloved through separation and union.[439]

In the *Sawāniḥ*, the lover and the beloved come together and are separated until they become indistinguishable. In this process of self-identification they escape the confines of time.[440]

> As long as he is self constituted, the dictates of separation and union, acceptance and denial, contraction and expansion, joy and sorrow, and such meanings, rule over him and he is a captive of time. As long as he

[438] Ibid.

[439] Within the context of separation and union, the relationship among the lover, the beloved, and love, is simultaneously the vehicle and the path in approaching unity.

[440] *Sawāniḥ*, pp. 36–37.

> is bound by time, depending on the demands of time, his being will be determined by the judgements of time. The rule and demand is that of time. Upon the path of annihilation from the self, these rules fade away and these contradictions vanish, because that abode is that of greed and desire.
>
> Because through the beloved he comes to recognize his self, his way to himself is through the other and by the other. Because his way to himself is through and by the other, such dictates do not apply to him. Here, what is the relevance of separation and union? When can acceptance and denial get hold of him? When can contraction and expansion, joy and sorrow, permeate the court of his dominion? Just as this verse testifies:
>
> We saw the essence of the universe and the fount of the world
> And we have passed with ease from cause and sustenance
>
> Considering that darkening light more than just the limit of negation,
> We passed from that also, neither this remained nor the other.

This famous couplet appears in the *Tamhīdāt* and also in the writing of Najm al-Dīn Rāzī (A.D. 1177–1256)[441] as he explains the quality of the lights that appear on the path of divine union with God.[442] Rāzī is reflecting on the heritage of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and his teacher, when he explains that the black light is the expression of God's attribute of majesty. This light appears as the wayfarer reaches the station of annihilation in annihilation. This is the stage when the wayfarer's self is purged to the degree that it can receive this black luminosity. Here, the wayfarer perceives the terrible onslaught of God's grandeur and majesty as the lord of life and death.[443] ʿAyn al-Quḍāt explains this light to be the final threshold before annihilation in God. His mentor, Aḥmad Ghazzāli, regards it in the context of temporality and consciousness. The lover who has arrived at this station is not bound by time. He sees himself as an eternal being who through this realization can have a more intimate relationship with God. This is the underlying concept in the identification between the lover and the beloved and the transcendence past time toward eternity and immortality.

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[441] Najm al-Dīn Rāzī Abū Bakr ʿAbdallāh ibn Muḥammad ibn Shahāwar Asadī.

[442] Najm al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Mirṣād al-ʿIbād Mīn al-Mabdaʿ ila Maʿād*, edited by Muḥammad Amīn Rīyāḥī (Tehran: Shirkat-i Intisharat-i Millī wa Farhangī, 1986), pp. 308–9; henceforth cited as Rāzī, *Mirṣād al-ʿIbād*.

[443] Ibid.

The lover steps out of his time in order to join the beloved. In the realm of the beloved a different kind of time reigns: a durationless time that upsets the conceptions of ordinary time. At this stage, the lover still perceives the beloved in terms of time; therefore, separation and union between the lover and the beloved are still defined and definable in relation to time, be it time temporal or the durationless time.[444] At this juncture in the journey, the wayfarer beholds the lofty opaque light of Satan, which Ghazzālī calls the dark light and ʿAyn al-Quḍāt refers to as the moonlight. The wayfarer passes through this light as the last barrier before reaching the beloved beyond time and light.

ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's discussion on Satan finds its genesis in the teachings of Aḥmad Ghazzālī. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt sees Satan as the chamberlain of admittance to the presence of God. He guards the domains of the beloved against the wayfarers who have gone past the stage of (*lā illāha*), the stage of renouncing all gods and idols. Satan drives them away from the beloved by deluding them with false lights and by frightening them, so they cannot reach the stage of asserting the unity of God (*illā allāh*).[445]

> O dear, I do not know your taste for "*lā ilāha illā allāh*." Gather your might to go past "*lā illāha*" and to reach the reality of "*illā allāh*". As you reach "*illā allāh*" you find protection and become secure.
>
> Alas, the progression of the wayfarers is in the circle of "*illā allāh*." "Indeed, God created the creatures from darkness." So, when they reach the circle of "*illā allāh*", they enter the circle of God. "Then He cast on them from His light"; this light begins conversing with him.

When discussing the final stages of the journey before union (*wiṣāl*), ʿAyn al-Quḍāt recalls Satan and the creation of Adam, a creature made of the dark matter and the light of God.[446] In the stage of *lā illāha* (there is no god), the wayfarer finds himself at the same crossroad as Satan: at the point of misunderstanding God and the boundaries between God and himself, and boasting of his intimacy with God. At this juncture, Satan insisted on his exclusive relationship with God. The wayfarer, also, can fall prey to the temptations of self-aggrandizement and become lost in this realm of illusion and

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[444] *Zubdat al-Ḥaqāʾiq*, p. 79.
[445] *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 101–2, pp. 73–74.
[446] *Qurʾān*, 38: 72.

negation.[447] Satan is well acquainted with the domain of *lā illāha* and can best distract and delay wayfarers in this realm. He is motivated by jealousy and invidiousness toward any one who approaches the beloved. The Prophet Muḥammad explains that Satan was created in order to block the passage of those whom God does not wish to have in His presence: "If God had wanted to grant forgiveness to all mankind, he would not have created Iblis."[448] Any one who can go past Satan, goes past the darkness of his own material existence and identifies with the light of God that is bestowed on him; such a person deserves to reach the beloved. Satan is in separation from the beloved, yet in close proximity to His presence. His distance from God is defined in a most intimate relationship: he is the beloved's chamberlain.[449] Moreover, the light of Satan borders on the light of Muḥammad, makes it visible, and is the obstacle to reaching this light. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt explains:[450]

> That is the light of Satan; they have described this witness by [the simile of] the curl. He is associated with the divine light. They call it darkness but it is light. Alas, has Abū al-Ḥassan al-Bustī not told you?[451] Have you not heard these verses by him?
>
> We secretly saw the universe and the fount of the world
> And we have passed with ease from cause and sustenance
> Consider that darkening light more than just the limit of negation
> We passed from that also, neither this remained nor the other.[452]
>
> Do you know what that black light is? "He was of those who reject faith"[453] is his cloak. He has drawn the sword of "Then, by Thy power, I will put all in the wrong"[454] and has unleashed himself in the darkness of "Through the dark spaces of land and sea."[455] He is the chamberlain of majesty, and the guardian of the presence of "I seek refuge in God

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[447] Awn, *Satan's Tragedy and Redemption*, pp. 134–36.

[448] *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 277, pp. 216–17.

[449] This relationship has varied significations. Here, I am concerned with the ones that relate to mystical death.

[450] *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 166–67, pp. 118–19.

[451] Bustī was a disciple of Abū ʿAlī Fārmadī and an associate of Ḥasan Sakkāk Simnānī and Muḥammad ibn Ḥammūya al-Juwaynī.

[452] This couplet by Abū al-Hasan al-Bustī appears in the *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 116, 326, pp. 119, 249.

[453] *Qurʾān*, 2: 34.

[454] Ibid., 38: 82.

[455] Ibid., 6: 97.

> from Satan the accursed one." Woe on the one who sees this witness with such cheek and mole and curl and eyebrow, and like Ḥusayn does not say "I am the truth."

In language similar to Ghazzālī's and filled with poetry and metaphors from his *Sawāniḥ*, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt discusses Satan as the foreboding, forlorn lover who leads the wayfarer astray. Satan is light but we refer to his light as black in order to show the contrast between his light and the light of Muḥammad. He further explains that Satan is an expression of the power of God. It is with the power of God that Satan keeps the wayfarer from reaching the beloved: "Then, by Thy power, I will put all in the wrong."[456] Satan disseminates his wrath in the darkness that delineates the light of Muḥammad, and also obstructs the wayfarer by seducing him or by inducing fear in him. He seduces the wayfarer by means of the false lights that he mistakes for the light of God. And he makes him faint and frightened through *fanāʾ* (annihilation).[457] ʿAyn al-Quḍāt explains Satan's trials in different contexts. In the *Tamhīdāt* he refers to the attractions of Satan in the context of his own out-of-body experience when he witnessed his own sinfulness.[458] In another instance he explains the power of Satan in terms of the love that he feels for him.[459]

> Alas, have you not ever been in love with God and Muḥammad, and in this midst been tempted by Satan for whose sake you wrote these verses?!
>
> We are wrung in the twist of your curl,
> We are wanderers in the wrath of your teasing eyes.
> We are bloodthirsty by impurity of [our]nature.
> We are, now, grieving by nature.
>
> If there is a remedy to this pain, it is He. How do you know if this can find a cure or not? Whoever is made faint and is killed in the world of Satan, he is given cure in the world of Muḥammad, because heresy has the quality of *fanāʾ* (annihilation) and belief has the mark of *baqāʾ* (sustenance). Unless there is annihilation there won't be sustenance. On

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[456] Ibid., 38: 82.

[457] Awn, *Satan's Tragedy and Redemption*, p. 139.

[458] *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 301, pp. 231–32.

> Alas, in this heavenly garden I described, this wretch was held for a month—so that people thought me dead. Then with utter reluctance the others sent me to a different station where I stayed for yet more time. In this second stage, a sin was born of me whose consequence, you shall some day see, I will be killed for.

[459] Ibid., sec. 302, pp. 232–33.

> this path, the more there is annihilation the more complete the sustenance will be.

The wayfarer who has already experienced mystical death, now faces dying or annihilation (*fanāʾ*) again. At this stage in the journey, Satan intimidates him and induces fear (*khawf*) in him in order to keep him away from the realm of *baqāʾ* (sustenance). That realm is permeated with the light of Muḥammad. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt compares *fanāʾ* to death and declares it as a necessary stage before attaining life or *baqāʾ*. Moreover, he explains that *fanāʾ* and *baqāʾ* are not fixed concepts but have different levels of intensity that the wayfarer experiences during his journeys.

In summary, the lights of Muḥammad and Satan are expressions of God's attributes of wrath and mercy. These lights complement each other and justify the creation in terms of separation and union. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt observed these lights through the opening of his inner sight. In the *Tamhīdāt* we read that God has bestowed on the heart of men a light whose appearance can lead to the opening of his inner sight.[460] This state is defined by visions of the lights of Muḥammad and Satan, which the wayfarer experiences through different stages of separation and union. The wayfarer who experiences *fanāʾ* and *baqāʾ* is still engaged with the realm of attributes. He understands the reality of *fanāʾ* and *baqāʾ* at the stage past the light of Muḥammad. That is the stage where the wayfarer comes closer to the presence of God. There, annihilation is finding sustenance in God. To die like this is to encounter one's identity by experiencing the lights within and by having visions of the unseen (*ghayb*). Mystical death is the initiation of a stage that leads to visions of the day of judgement and goes beyond that to where light and seeing are no longer a modality in understanding. Through mystical death the wayfarer comes to see the mysteries of the unseen as well as himself in light of His attributes. But later, he experiences annihilation in God and unity with His essence. This understanding is inseparable from the mystical experience of death on the one hand, and mysticism as an activity of the heart on the other. The association among the opening of the heart, light, seeing, death, and beyond light, is established in a special realm of consciousness where one's identity is as singularly defined as one's death.

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[460] Ibid., sec. 272, pp. 212–13.

CHAPTER FIVE

# THE LEGACY OF ʿAYN AL-QUḌĀT

The first modern scholars who took note of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt lived, just as he had, at a critical juncture in history. Their epoch was scorched by catastrophic world wars and the rise of Fascism among the most sophisticated European nations, Italy and Germany. Evil was rampant and the promise of rationality seemed to have been a deception. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and the others in his milieu, made sense to the Franco-Arab intellectuals who were searching for spiritual certainty among the ruins of their collapsing civilization. At the turn of the twentieth-century, two major European scholars, Louis Massignon and Henry Corbin, opened the field of Islamic studies to the West. They joined their Indo-Iranian colleagues to advance a complex project aimed at retrieving and canonizing the mystical heritage of Islam. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and Aḥmad Ghazzālī were especially important in this project because they were among the first Iranian authors of mystical prose literature who produced works in Persian. They were original thinkers who dared to write about a God who could be loved and could in fact be known in the sensual intimacies among humans. They wrote about a God who could be seen in the beautiful face of young men. And, similar to Ḥallāj, they propagated a stark view of Satan as an angel, be it a fallen one. For them, Satan was a possessive lover who still held a special relationship with the beloved. He was the intimate chamberlain of the beloved and was allotted the task of baring others from approaching His presence. The God that these mystics described, was not a tyrant who sat in judgement over the souls of the dead on the day of judgement. The day of judgement was at hand; death was a quotidian visionary reality, as mundane as the living; and God was a merciful and benevolent presence who was as close to man as the throbbing of his jugular vein. These ideas were appealing to the hybrid European Islamists of the Massignon era whose research was focused on themes that stood in sharp contrast to the conventional Euro-centric reception of Islam up to that point.

Jean Mohammed ben Abd el-Jalil (1904-79), a Franco-Moroccan Muslim convert to Catholicism, and ʿAffīf ʿUsayrān (1919-88), a

Lebanese shīʿi who also converted to Catholicism, were the first in their generation to make significant contributions to the scholarship on ʿAyn al-Quḍāt. ʿUsayrān completed his dissertation in philosophy and Persian literature at the University of Tehran. The dissertation consisted of the edited manuscripts of the *Tamhīdāt* and his critical introduction to the text. In the acknowledgments, ʿUsayrān paid homage to his Iranian mentors, Dhabīḥ Allāh Ṣafā and Muḥammad Muʿīn, and also Henry Corbin, specifically, for teaching him how to read and edit manuscripts. Abd el-Jalil in the 1930s edited and published *Shakwā al-Gharīb ʿan al-Awṭān ilā ʿUlamāʾ al-Buldān* (The Complaint of a Stranger Exiled from Home to the Scholars of the Lands). He also provided a French translation of the text. He soon turned his attention to other aspects of Islam whereas ʿUsayran dedicated most of his life to retrieving and editing the unpublished manuscripts of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt. He and his Iranian colleague, ʿAlīnaqī Munzavī, established the fulcrum upon which further study of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt was built. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt was a logical choice for these scholars considering that Massignon had selected the martyred Ḥallāj as the subject of his *magnum opus*, and Henry Corbin had dedicated a significant part of his work to another martyr, Suhrawardī al-Maqtūl. All three had been executed for the crime of pushing the boundaries of knowledge and rational thought far beyond the sanctified limits of the *sharīʿa*.

The reception of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt in his own time, is a more complex matter. His horrific execution was meant to be a hunting spectacle for others to learn from. After he was gone, no one dared to openly associate with his name and memory. Unlike the often discussed Ḥallāj who lived and died in a different epoch, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt was a contemporary and his case was too sensitive to be brought up in the writing of his time. He was readily identified as a brilliant but reckless thinker who vexed the state authorities and brought destruction upon himself and some of his friends. Another reason for his oblivion was that he died young and did not enjoy the renown of his older colleagues who were deemed more significant and were discussed at length in the medieval canons. Moreover, his complex writing style was difficult to understand. For these reasons he did not receive sufficient attention in the mystical literature of the medieval period except marginally and often parenthetically as the student of Aḥmad Ghazzālī. For example, *Sharḥ-i Shaṭḥīyyāt*, the encyclopedic compilation of Rūzbihān Baqlī on Islamic mysticism, did not include ʿAyn al-Quḍāt even though the

visionary inspirations of the author embodied ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's discussions on the divine attributes of beauty and majesty. Nor did Najm al-Dīn Kubrā and Suhrawardī mention ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, although their elaborate discussion of light and color photism was closely related to the mystical project of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt. Their work offers examples of how some of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's arguments appeared in the doctrinal writings of his successors without any explicit mention of his name. Najm al-Dīn Rāzī (A.D. 1177–1256), more than a hundred years later, called attention to the teachings that were identified with Aḥmad Ghazzālī and his student ʿAyn al-Quḍāt.

ʿAyn al-Quḍāt received exclusive attention only in the writings of two medieval authors. As discussed in the first chapter, the historian of the Saljūq era, ʿImād al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī (A.D. 1125–1201) remembered ʿAyn al-Quḍāt in a succinct but expressive description in his *Kharīdat al-Qaṣr wa Jarīdat al-ʿAṣr fī Dhikr Fuḍalāʾ Ahl Fārs* (The Unbored Pearl of the Palace and Account-Book of the Age: An Account of the Eminent Men of Persia). He knew of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt all his life because ʿImād al-Dīn's influential uncles were his intimate friends. In fact, his uncle ʿAzīz al-Dīn who was an important minister and chancellor in the Saljūq court was expelled from his high administrative position and subsequently imprisoned and executed during the same time as ʿAyn al-Quḍāt. These events had a detrimental effect on ʿImād al-Dīn's entire family who were stripped of their noble status and sent into exile. Consequently, when ʿImād al-Dīn grew to be a historian, he included his uncle and ʿAyn al-Quḍāt in his chronicle of the Saljūqs. Another scholar of the Saljūq era, Najm al-Dīn Rāzī made references to Aḥmad Ghazzālī and his student's mystical doctrines. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt was not the focus of anyone's writings until the fourteenth century when the revered Indian Chishtī mystic scholar Sayyid Muḥammad al-Ḥussaynī Abū al-Fatḥ Ṣadr al-Dīn Walī Akbar Ṣādiq (A.D. 1321–1422), known as Khawājah Banda Nawāz Gīsūdarāz provided a comprehensive commentary on the *Tamhīdāt*. The following pages will evaluate the reception of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt by medieval authors and especially the Chishtī leader Khawājah Banda Nawāz Gīsūdarāz.

## *Najm al-Dīn Rāzī*

Najm al-Dīn Rāzī Abū Bakr ʿAbdallāh ibn Muḥammad ibn Shahāwar aspired to the teachings of the visionary mystics of the twelfth century but distinguished himself from them as an authentically devout Muslim. His most important scholarly project *Mirṣād al-ʿIbād min al-Mabdaʾ il al-Maʿād* (The Path of God's Bondsmen from Origin to Return) was an overview of the mystical heritage that concerned these authors. Rāzī discussed the teachings of important mystics, and in this manner, described his own teachings on the origin of the soul, the existence of humankind, and the meaning of death. Rāzī is known to have had very few disciples, perhaps because he did not stay in one place for long or because his complex personality made it difficult for others to work with him. Nonetheless, his lucid prose style won him the title *dāya* for through his writing he had fostered numerous disciples. Rāzī is lauded for his mastery of Persian and his authorial ability to effectively communicate mystical meanings, which were often vague and obscure in the turgid prose of others. Rāzī left his hometown Rayy, west of Khurāsān, for Khawārazm in his early twenties. There he joined the Kubrawī order and studied with Majd al-Dīn Baghdādī (d. A.D. 1219)[461] who was a disciple of Abū al-Jannāb Aḥmad ibn ʿUmar Najm al-Dīn Kubrā (d. A.D. 1220). The muʿtazilite rulers of Khawārazm were antagonistic toward these visionary mystic scholars and in fact sentenced Majd al-Dīn Baghdādī to death by drowning in the Oxus river.[462] Rāzī who feared these rulers and was apprehensive of the imminent threat of the Mongol and Tatar invasion, left Khawārazm for good and resumed his travels through the greater Persia, Irāq, Shām, Egypt, and Transoxania.[463] In the year A.D. 1221, escaping from the onslaught of war and invasion, he fled to Hamadhān, the home to ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, and stayed there for one year with the anticipation that the attacks would subside and he would return to his family in Rayy.[464] But the enemy was advancing westward and Rāzī had to leave again first for Irbīl and from there to Anatolia where he

[461] Rāzī, *Mirṣād al-ʿIbād*, p. 66. Rāzī pays homage to Baghdādī and identifies him as his mentor.

[462] Shaykh Majd al-Dīn Baghdādī was executed by drowning in the Oxus river on the order of ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn Muḥammad Khawārazm Shāh.

[463] Rāzī, *Mirṣād al-ʿIbād*, introduction, pp. 14–19.

[464] Ibid., pp. 17–19.

found refuge from the "infidel" Mongols and Tatars in the powerful dominion of the Saljūqs.

Rāzī's writing reflects the complexities of his age and demonstrates the breath and depth of his learnings. During his travels, he had the opportunity to meet important religious scholars of his time including Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq al-Qūnyawī (A.D. 1207–74)), Awḥad al-Dīn Ḥāmid Kirmānī (d. A.D. 1238), and Shihāb al-Dīn Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar Suhrawardī (A.D.1145–1234). His thoughtful approach to his research on Islamic mysticism is attested by *Mirṣād al-ʿIbād min al-Mabdaʾ il al-Maʿād*, which he dedicated to the Saljūq ruler of Rūm, ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn Kayqubād ibn Qīyāth al-Dīn Kaykhūsraw (d. A.D. 1237).[465] Even though Rāzī's treatise is dedicated to a Turkish ruler, it is composed in Persian and for the Persian reader. The second chapter entitled *Concerning the Reason for Writing the Book*, *Particularly in Persian* justifies Rāzī's choice of Persian as follows:

> God Almighty said: "We have sent no messenger save with the tongue of his people that he might make all clear to them." The Prophet, upon whom be peace, said: "Address people in accordance with their degree of intelligence."
>
> Know that although many books have been written concerning the Path, both detailed and concise, and in them many matters and truths set forth, most of them are in Arabic, and they benefit men of Persian tongue but little.
>
> 'Tis of the ancient grief one must tell the new beloved,
> And in her tongue that one must make address.
> To say *lā tafʿal* and *efʿal* is of little use;
> If thou art with Persians, 'tis *kon* and *makon* thou must say.[466]

Rāzī honored his Persian heritage, especially at a time when his homeland was being plundered and devastated. He took it upon himself to protect the cultural life of this heritage and the intellectual vitality of the Persian-speaking world. These are the reasons that he identified for writing in Persian. Moreover, Rāzī was fulfilling his own scholarly destiny as he chose to work in the authorial tradition that was established and advanced by Khawāja ʿAbd Allāh al-Anṣārī al-Harawī (A.D. 1005–89), Aḥmad Ghazzālī, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, Rūzbihān

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[465] Ibid., p. 30.

[466] Najm al-Dīn Rāzī, *The Path of God's Bondsmen from Origin to Return*, translated by Hamid Algar (New York: Caravan Books, 1982), p. 38; henceforth cited as Rāzī, *The Path of God's Bondsmen*.

al-Baqlī, and Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī. Their *avant la lettre* work on Persian mystical prose—which, in contrast to mystical poetry, was still dominated by Arabic, the lingua franca of the Islamic civilization—was a much needed contribution. Rāzī was exercising his craft following in the footsteps of authors who were hailed for their command of the Persian language as a literary medium. He joined their ranks for the eloquence and the rhetorical quality of his prose and the subtlety of his discussions.

Rāzī refers to the teachings of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and Aḥmad Ghazzālī at several places in his writing. He appeals to their ideas and some of their poetry such as the famous couplet of Ghazzālī that is one of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's favorites: "My head is so full of your love / that I fool myself that you are in love with me / either the canopies of your union will be raised in my mind / or my head will be raised on the gallows because of your love."[467] An important example of their reflection in Rāzī's work is the discussion on Satan and his black light. Rāzī attests to their interpretation of the black light to be the beacon that foreshadows the approach of the station of annihilation in annihilation. To behold this light is the testament to one's progress on the path of self identification with God. The black light of Satan is the manifestation of the wrath and the majesty of God. This is the light that burns the wayfarer in annihilation. Rāzī explains that the faculty of reason is incapable of understanding this light because it cannot understand the union of opposites, by which he means the juxtaposition of this light against the munificence of the illuminating light of God's beauty.[468] Satan makes himself known in the dawning of this light when the soul is strong enough to endure greater intimacy with God.[469] In other words, the appearance of Satan is the measure of that intimacy. It is also the expression of the meaning of the unity of God: "There is no god, but God, " which begins with a negation and is followed by an assent. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt explains this light to be the final threshold before annihilation in God and the state of self identification with Him. And Ghazzālī explains it in terms of the dissolution of time in eternity. Rāzī invokes these arguments when he says:

> As for the attributes of splendor, when they manifest, in the station of the effacement of effacement, the imperiousness of the awe of divinity

[467] Rāzī, *Mirṣād al-ʿIbād*, p. 50.
[468] Ibid., pp. 307–8.
[469] Ibid., pp. 308–9.

> and the severity of the majesty of eternity, a black light is witnessed that dispenses man from all need of other than God, causes him to abide in God, and gives life and death. For with the appearance of this light the supreme talisman is broken and all vague images are dispersed. Shaikh Aḥmad Gazālī, upon him be God's mercy, says in this connection:
>
> We saw the world's origin and its inner aspect,
> And passed with ease beyond all sickness and disgrace.
> Know that black light to be higher than the point of "no";
> Beyond that too we passed; neither this nor that remained.
>
> The Prophet, upon whom be peace, when he prayed in supplication, saying, "Show us things as they truly are," was seeking the manifestation of the lights of the attributes of favor and wrath. For all that has existence in the two worlds has it either from the ray of the lights of the attributes of His favor, or from this, nothing has real existence, or subsists through its own essence. For real existence belongs only to God, Who ceases not nor has ceased. Thus He said: "He is the first and the last, the outward and the inward."[470]

In an endnote to the original Persian of the passage, Muḥammad Amīn Rīyāḥī, the editor of the Persian manuscript, argues that Rāzī had mistakenly attributed the above couplet to Aḥmad Ghazzāīī because he had not seen the *Tamhīdāt* where ʿAyn al-Quḍāt cites the same poem in two places and in both instances identifies the poet to be the famous mystic, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Bustī.[471] The editor's comment seems to overlook Rāzī's subtle economy of words as in these lines he invokes the whole Khurāsān mystical tradition that was represented by Abū ʿAlī al-Faḍl Fārmadhī (d. 1083/477), his student Abū al-Ḥasan al-Bustī, and Ghazzālī and ʿAyn al-Quḍāt. The couplet by Bustī appears in Ghazzālī's *Sawāniḥ*, and is aptly associated with the writing of the latter as a representative figure of this mystical tradition.[472] The reference by Rāzī points to the whole tradition. Contrary to Rīyāḥī's argument, it is not an indicator of Rāzī's lack of exposure to ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's most famous work the *Tamhīdāt*. Rāzī stayed in Hamadhān for a year, hoping that he would be able to return to his hometown, Rayy. He was an erudite scholar who sought knowledge wherever he found himself, even in flight and in self-imposed exile. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, and especially his *Tamhīdāt*, could not skip Rāzī as is evident in his

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[470] Rāzī, *The Path of God's Bondsmen*, pp. 302–3.

[471] Ibid., pp. 630–31. Cf. ʿAbdal-Raḥmān Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt al-Uns min Ḥaḍarāt al-Quds*. 5th edition, ed. Maḥmūd ʿĀbidī (Tehran: Gulrang Yiktā, 2007), p. 417.

[472] *Sawāniḥ*, pp. 36–37.

detailed analysis of the black light of Satan, that is one of the principal discussions of the *Tamhīdāt* and not the *Sawāniḥ*.

Another important reference to ʿAyn al-Quḍāt appears in the discussion of the tranquil soul (*nafs-i muṭmaʾina*), which is the soul of the prophets and the friends of God.[473] Rāzī begins the chapter by making his stance clear and identifying the *sharīʿa* as his chosen path.

> Know in truth that from the station of the commanding soul it is possible to advance to the station of the tranquil soul only through the effect of the rapturous states bestowed by God and the elixir of the Law. Thus God said: "Verily the soul commands unto evil, except my Lord be merciful."
>
> In the beginning, every soul has the attribute of commandingness, even if it be the soul of a prophet or saint, until trained by the Law it reaches the station of tranquility, which is the utmost that the human essence is able to attain, and thus becomes fit to hear the summons, "return!"[474]

He then advances his argument in a tone and diction that gradually resonates with that of the work *Lawāyiḥ*, which is concerned with the dichotomy between love and reason. This text is mistakenly attributed to ʿAyn al-Quḍāt because its author, most probably the Chishtī shaykh Qāḍī Ḥamīd al-Dīn Nāgawrī (d. A.D. 1244), aspired to the teachings of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and Aḥmad Ghazzālī and patterned his work after the *Sawāniḥ*. This influence is expressed in how the work by Rāzī and the author of the *Lawāyiḥ* highlight similar tropes. The *Lawāyiḥ* concerns itself with the soul and how it fares in the world. Rāzī uses the image of the fire of love, the moth / bird and the hunter, to describe the transcendence of the tranquil soul. The bird flies toward the fire of God's majesty acting as both the hunter and the prey. He is the alert and the infatigable hunter who is set on capturing the beloved by overcoming himself. The celestial archangels Gabriel and Michael, and the angelic hosts doubt that the feeble soul of mankind can surpass them in approaching God for "when in their hunting they came upon the attributes of the beauty and splendor of Eternal Besoughtness [*ṣamadīyat*], they drew in their wings and pinions and abandoned prey and the hunt."[475] But, the soul is driven with his love/hunt, and flies with the wings of desire that God has bestowed upon him. Despite the mockery and doubt that is directed against him through the

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[473] Rāzī, *The Path of God's Bondsmen*, pp. 359–75.
[474] Ibid., p. 359.
[475] Ibid., p. 371.

journey, he arrives at the destination in a place-of-no-place. It is at this point that he reassures the beloved, who is annoyed by the hardships that he has endured, saying:

> We are not shamed by reproach for thy love,
> We have no quarrel with the ignorant of love.
> This drink of loverhood is given only to men;
> The unmanly have no share in the goblet of love.[476]

This couplet appears in the *Lawāyiḥ* in the context of the ruinous qualities of love.[477] The lover is described as a bird who is flying in the skies of his own world. The latter consists of a dimensionless space where he is the seeker and the sought, the hunter and the prey, the lover and the beloved. The flight consists of these realizations. The gaze of the wayfarer is steadily fixed onto himself whence he understands that all of creation from the highest in heaven, to the lowest in this our domain of Satan, are in love with their own perfection for understanding the mysteries of the unseen. The wayfarer understands this to be the purpose of the creation so that God, the hidden treasure, can manifest Himself. Moreover, he understands that the lover cannot be blamed of fault and reproach because he is in love and cannot be questioned about his reckless and dangerous actions such as rushing toward the flame of annihilation.[478] Rāzī brings this chapter to closure with the powerful remark that so far he has been describing the group of people who "have died a true death before the occurrence of material death."[479] Consequently, God has granted them resurrection and a special place in His presence not only on the day of return but also in this world because their soul has transcended the material world of appearances.[480]

Rāzī's indebtedness to these visionary mystics did not prevent him from attacking them for sympathizing with the philosophers and for

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[476] Ibid., p. 374. Cf. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, *Lawāyiḥ*, p. 35.

[477] ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, *Lawāyiḥ*, p. 35. This version is different only in the choice of a few words.

> We are not shamed by reproach for thy love,
> We have no quarrel with the force of that love.
> This drink of loverhood is given only to the confident;
> The strangers have no share in the goblet of love.

[478] Ibid., pp. 35–36.

[479] Rāzī, *The Path of God's Bondsmen*, p. 375.

[480] Ibid.

adhering to unorthodox views of Islam. Rāzī saw himself as a teacher and treated his writing as a didactic enterprise, which was intended for the students of Islam.[481] Within this framework, he voiced his contempt for the philosophers whom he identified to be the embodiment of the "most wretched soul, which is the commanding soul" (*nafs-i ashqā wa ān nafs-i ammārah ast*). Rāzī was antagonistic toward those who were responsible for corrupting the religion by taking individual initiative for understanding the mysteries that were revealed to the Prophet by God. They engaged in learning concerning God and spoke about His knowledge, but did not follow the path of faith, which Rāzī defined to be the pillars of Islam. Their pursuit of knowledge, Rāzī maintained, was limited to serving themselves and their own ego. Therefore, Rāzī considered it legitimate that they should be executed. The category that he referred to included a wide range from Khayyām of Nishābūr (A.D. 1048–1131), to ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and Suhrawardī, whose ideas were not in line with the teachings of the *sharīʿa*.[482] He expressed regret that the time of those rulers and religious leaders who protected Islam from harm by such people was past. Moreover, he interpreted the Mongol and the Tatar catastrophe to be a sign from God showing His wrath against the decadence and self-indulgence that defined his era. He explained:

> Concern for religion is not laying hold of the skirt of any monarch's soul, so that he might attempt to repulse the disaster and repair the damage it has caused. It is in roughly the last twenty years that this disaster has appeared and gained strength, for in previous ages none of this group had the temerity to divulge his opinions. They all concealed their unbelief, for there were God-fearing leaders in the sphere of religion, as well as pious monarchs who guarded religion against such pollution.
>
> In this age only a few God-fearing leaders have survived to care for religion and respectfully call the attention of kings to the damage caused by unbelief, so that they might undertake its repair. It is therefore to be feared as a matter of course that the empty chatter concerning religion which is still heard

[481] Not any specific disciple was identified with him, probably because he did not stay in one place for a long time or because his complex personality prevented students from working with him.

[482] Rāzī, *Mirṣād al-ʿIbād*, p. 30.

> from some mouths will disappear, and the whole world will be submerged in the chatter of unbelief.[483]

Rāzī's conflictual attitude toward these visionary mystics makes his writing intriguing. His complex approach to these thinkers can be summarized in terms of (1) his inclination toward these authors and admiration for them (2) his antagonism toward the same philosophers and mystics who nonetheless inspired him, and (3) his adherence to traditional Islam. Rāzī vouched for ascetic piety as he was, ironically, drawn to the ecstatic mysticism of Manṣūr ibn Ḥallāj and those who followed in his walk, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and Aḥmad Ghazzālī. In fact, a most captivating instance in *Mirṣād al-ʿIbād* is when Rāzī remembers the execution of Ḥallāj and begins addressing him as his confident. In a dramatic scene, he praises Ḥallāj for his reckless love of God and relates his martyrdom in the imagery of fire and annihilation. He describes the execution like an eyewitness who was present at the proceeding. The striking quality of Rāzī's description lies in his trust in his reader as his companion at the scene of the execution. By implication, he is recapturing the mystical meaning of Ḥallāj's execution for the reader who is transported to the scene as the spectator of a momentous instance in the history of Islamic mysticism.[484]

Rāzī was one of the several Persian mystics of the medieval era who were studied by the early Chishtīs. The fourteenth-century historiographer Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn Baranī (d. A.D. 1357)[485] records that *Mirṣād al-ʿIbād* was a popular treatises in Delhi.[486] This was the hometown of Naṣīr al-Dīn Maḥmūd Chirāgh Dihlī (d. A.D. 1356), and his disciple Gīsūdarāz who referred to Rāzī in his work but did not subscribe to his religious zeal for the *sharīʿa*. Gīsūdarāz, similar to other early Chishtīs, was inclined toward mystics like ʿAyn al-Quḍāt whose *Tamhīdāt* was the subject of his famous commentary.

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[483] Rāzī, *The Path of God's Bondsmen*, pp. 382–83.

[484] Rāzī, *Mirṣād al-ʿIbād*, pp. 336–37.

[485] Baranī's *Tārīkh Fīrūzshāhī* was dedicated to Fīrūzshāh Tughluq. His other extant works are *Fatāwā Jahāndārī*, *Naʿt Muḥammadī*, and *Akhbār Barmakiyyān*.

[486] Rāzī, *The Path of God's Bondsmen*, p. 20. Hamid Algar provides the following information on the reception of this text in India.

> About two centuries later, in Ebn ʿOmar Meḥrāb's *Ḥojjat al-Hend*, a polemic against Hinduism, we find extracts from the *Merṣād* being placed in the mouth of a parrot instructing a princess in Islam. Dāya's arguments concerning the inadequacy of Brahmanic mysticism must have aroused particular interest in India.

## *Khawāja Banda Nawāz Gīsūdarāz*

The Chishtī order was founded by Khawāja Abū Isḥāq Shāmī (d. A.D. 937) who was a student of Khawāja Mamshād ʿAlī of Dinawar (d. A.D. 911) in Quhistān, a region in the Jibāl between Hamadhān and Baghdād. Upon his teacher's request that he should spread the teachings of the faith, Khawāja Abū Isḥāq moved eastward toward Khurāsān and settled in Chisht, near Herat in today's Afghanistan.[487] His teachings were brought to India by Khawāja Muʿīn al-Dīn Muḥammad Ḥasan Sijzī Chishtī (A.D. 1142–1236), known as *Gharībnawāz* (supporter of the poor), who was born in Sistān (Sijistān) and died in Ajmīr where he established a following among the local Indians. He is an iconic authority in the Chishtī tradition and an advocate for the teachings of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and Aḥmad Ghazzālī. His treatise *Ganj al-Asrār* (The Treasure of Secrets) refers to ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and Aḥmad Ghazzālī extensively. Khawāja Muʿīn al-Dīn Sijzī set an example for his followers to study these important mystics of Iran. Muʿīn al-Dīn was in contact with Shihāb al-Dīn Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī (A.D. 1145–1234)—a follower of Aḥmad Ghazzālī and the author of *ʿAwārīf al-Maʿārif* (The Givens of Knowledge)—and subscribed to the teachings of this Persian mystic/scholar. Shihāb al-Dīn Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar was the teacher of the famous Chishtī Shaykh Qāḍī Ḥamīd al-Dīn Nāgawrī who is arguably the author of the *Lawāyiḥ*—a treatise that is erroneously attributed to ʿAyn al-Quḍāt. In his lifetime, Shihāb al-Dīn was in contact with Najm al-Dīn al-Rāzī, whom he received in Malatya after his departure from Hamadhān as he was fleeing the Tatars. In fact, it was Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī who sponsored Rāzī in Anatolia by writing him a letter of introduction, which was addressed to the Saljūq ruler and the nobles of Rūm.[488] The relationship among these Persian mystics on the one hand, and the existing rapport between Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī and Muʾīn al-Dīn, on the other hand, created a reliable venue to take to India the works of these Persian mystics and those who preceded them: ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, Suhrawardī al-Maqtūl, and the Ghazzālī brothers. The other means for the influx of these texts into India were travel, commerce, and contact between the Persian and the Chishtī scholars and their disciples. In the fourteenth-century, when Gīsūdarāz lived, the

[487] Chisht-i Sharīf is a small village about 110 miles east of Herat, Afghanistan.
[488] Rāzī, *Mirṣād al-ʿIbād*, pp. 22–23.

writings of Iranian mystics constituted an established part of the curriculum that the Chishtīs used in training their disciples. They paid special attention to Aḥmad Ghazzālī and his distinguished student ʿAyn al-Quḍāt. The Chishtīs admired the erudition and intellectual vigor that these masters demonstrated in explaining complex spiritual subjects. Ghazzālī's theoretical views on *samāʿ* (audition of music), which appear in the final section of this chapter, were particularly important for the Chishtīs.

The founders of the Chishtī order considered learning a spiritual practice. The masters of the order were expected to know the inner meaning of the scholarly issues that were posed to them. This tradition of scholarly wayfaring reached an apex in the extraordinary work of Khawāja Banda Nawāz Gīsūdarāz. He was a visionary mystic, learned scholar, religious leader, and a follower of the *sharīʿa*.[489] In his work, he provided extensive commentaries on Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. A.D.996), Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq al-Kalābādhī (d. A.D. 990–94), Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. A.D. 1072), Al-Hujwīrī (d. A.D. 1072), Muḥammad Ghazzālī, Aḥmad Ghazālī, and ʿAyn al-Quḍāt. He also referred to Najm al-Dīn al-Kubrā (d. A.D. 1221), Ibn al-ʿArabī (d. A.D. 1240), Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. A.D. 1273), ʿAzīz al-Dīn al-Nasafī 13th century, Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār (d. A.D. 1119), Sanāʾī (d. A.D. 1131), Abū al-Najīb al-Suhrawardī (d. A.D. 1168), and Shihāb al-Dīn ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī (d. A.D. 1234). Gīsūdarāz was a sunnī follower of the Ḥanafī school but his forefathers were shīʿis from Khurāsān known as Sayyid Ḥussaynī. The name means descendents from the house of the Prophet through his daughter Fāṭima, the mother of the shīʿi iconic martyr Imām Ḥussayn. The descendents of Gīsūdarāz have used the name Ḥussaynī as their surname until the present age. Currently, Syed Shah Khusro Hussaini is in charge of the Shaykh's shrine and the *dargāh* in Gulbarga of Deccan. The *dargāh* institution is the site of research, education, pilgrimage, and the annual *ʿurs* (death-anniversary) celebration. Sahib Hussaini traces the etymology of the word Gīsūdarāz to the ancestors of Khawāja Banda Nawāz who were known in Khurāsān as the "sayyids with long-locks (*sādāt-i dirāz gisū*)."[490] Muḥammad ʿAlī Sāmānī, Gīsūdarāz's disciple and biographer, relates that the name was first used in a conversation between Chirāgh

[489] Syed Shah Khusro Hussaini, *Sayyid Muḥammad Al-Ḥusaynī-i Gīsūdirāz (72/1321–825/1422): On Sufism* (Delhi: Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delhi, 1983), p. 16; henceforth cited as Hussaini, *Sayyid Muḥammad Al-Ḥusaynī-i Gīsūdirāz*.

[490] Ibid., p. 11.

Delhī and his disciple Mawlānā ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn Anṣārī Alandī. The Shaykh had instructed this student to select a fellow among his peers as a tutor. Alandī chose Khawāja Banda Nawāz whom he described to the Shaykh as the sayyad with long-locks. Chirāgh Delhī summoned Khawāja Banda Nawāz by the title Gīsūdarāz and said "Gīsūdarāz come and keep ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn in your company and make him benefit from what I have taught you."[491] Sāmānī explains that Gīsūdarāz's hair was long and reached his knees and during *samāʿ* sessions when they danced and moved about, his hair touched the ground.

Gīsūdarāz was born in Delhi and was a young boy of four when his family moved to Dawlatābād of Deccan in A.D. 1325, a few years prior to the forced migration campaign of Sultan Muḥammad ibn Tughluq (d. A.D. 1351).[492] The migration south was part of the political campaign of the ruler of Delhi who was intent on establishing a second capital in Deccan. His plan was to expand his dominion to the South and create a Muslim settlement in that area in order to offset the non-Islamic population of the region. Consequently, he required that the learned Muslim shaykhs be moved there. Khawāja Banda Nawāz's father, Sayyīd Yūsuf al-Ḥusaynī, known as Rājū Qattāl (d. A.D. 1330 ), was among the first Dihlawī elite who relocated with his family to the Deccan. Over the years, Khuldābād of Deccan became the Chishtī spiritual center in India and gained the title of the "valley of the saints." Sayyīd Yūsuf al-Ḥusaynī who died while Gīsūdarāz was still a young boy, was one of the first Sufis who was buried in Khuldābād.[493] A disciple of Shaykh Niẓām al-Dīn al-Awliyā', he was a famous Sufi with followers during his life and after his death. After the death of his father and an eight year stay in the Deccan, Gīsūdarāz and his family returned to Delhi. It was in Delhi that at age twelve, or according to some accounts fifteen, Gīsūdarāz and his brother Chandān, joined the tutelage of Chirāgh Dihlī. Gīsūdarāz remained in Delhi until A.D. 1398

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[491] Muḥammad ʿAlī Sāmānī, *Sayrī Muḥammadī*, edited by Aḥmad Sikandarpūrī (Ilāh Abād: Yūnānī Dawlatkhāna Press, 1957), pp. 12–13.

[492] Ibid., p. 8.

[493] Carl Ernst, *Eternal Garden: Mysticism, History, and Politics at a South Asian Sufi Center* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1992), p.310n25. Ernst remarks that *qattāl* (slayer) means the killer of the carnal soul and not a butcher: "A number of Sufis also carried the alarming epithet Qattāl ("killer"), but in the biographical literature this name only applies to those who performed extensive asceticism and meditation, and have "killed" the carnal soul; cf. the eccentric ʿAyn al-Dīn Qattāl, in *Mirʾāt al-asrār* (Urdu trans.), II, 455, and the recluse Ṣadr al-Dīn Rājū Qattāl, in *Akhbār al-akhyār*, p. 145"; henceforth cited as Ernst, *Eternal Garden*.

when he set out for Dawlatābād in the company of his family and his disciples who included his biographer Sāmānī.[494]

The decision to return to the Deccan was prompted by Timur's (A.D. 1336–1405) campaign against India. Timur justified his campaign as an attempt to save Islam and to defeat the Delhi rulers for their mild attitude toward the Hindu population. Gīsūdarāz had predicted Timur's attack and the fall of Delhi about three years prior to the military conquest. According to Sāmānī, during that time Gīsūdarāz used to warn those around him about what the future held and advised them to leave Delhi. When Gīsūdarāz and his company arrived in Deccan, the Bahmanī king, Fīrūzshāh (r. A.D. 1397–1422) showed Gīsūdarāz the respect deserving of his stature. Fīrūzshāh was enthusiastic about Gīsūdarāz's relocation to his domain and when the caravan reached the outskirst of the city, the king was personally awaiting their arrival.[495] Sāmānī describes that upon the arrival of Gīsūdarāz in the Fataḥābād district of Dawlatābād, Fīrūzshāh invited him to his capital Aḥsanābād (Gulbarga). The Shaykh thought about the offer and responded that he would have accepted the invitation except that the king's life was soon to end; therefore, his residence in the vicinity of the king was futile as the king was destined to leave. The king asked for his blessings so that God would prolong his life. After a few days of prayer, the Shaykh told Fīrūzshāh that his prayers have been answered and the king was granted to live as long as the Shaykh himself. That proved accurate and Fīrūzshāh died only a few days earlier than Gīsūdarāz. The Shaykh and his company settled in Aḥsanābād (Gulbarga) in A.D. 1400. Fīrūzshāh's initial enthusiasm for him waned in time; however, his younger brother Khān Khānān Aḥmad Shāh (d. A.D. 1436) remained dedicated to Gīsūdarāz and helped him build the fortress that served as his residence and hospice. After the passing of Gīsūdarāz, the hospice was transformed to the *dargah* where his family and disciples lived in residence. This tradition has been kept alive over the centures. To this day, there are students of religious sciences who live at the *dargah*. Gīsūdarāz's residential quarters have been transformed into the *dargah*'s library, and some pilgrims spend the night in the courtyards of the shrines of the Khawāja and his descendants. The Hussaini family lives on the *dargah* premises within walking distance of the shrine. Their efforts in cultivating the

[494] Hussaini, *Sayyid Muḥammad Al-Ḥusaynī-i Gīsūdirāz*, p. 12.
[495] Sāmānī, *Sayrī Muḥammadī*, pp. 27–29.

Gulbarga community at large through establishing schools, colleges, and universities, have promoted learning in the spirit of the early Chishtīs. Today, Gulbarga is counted as one of the most active educational centers in India.

## Sharḥ-i Tamhīdāt

Gīsūdarāz was an erudite scholar with remarkable knowledge of Islamic and Indian spiritual traditions. He was a devout Muslim and a religious leader who followed the *sharīʿa* but was also inclined toward the learnings of mystics like ʿAyn al-Quḍāt who evaluated faith in terms of knowledge by presence or proximity to God. His commentary on ʿAyn al-Quḍāt complemented the existing Chishtī scholarship on him. Gīsūdarāz's contribution, however, was distinguished in its exclusive and detailed focus on ʿAyn al-Quḍāt independent of the insurmountable image of his teacher, Aḥmad Ghazzālī. Gīsūdarāz was fond of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and in instances when he disagreed with ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and criticized his views, he still defended him and offered justification for the perspective under consideration. Sometimes, he conveyed his affection for ʿAyn al-Quḍāt in his playful manner of referring to the master as being young and immature or perhaps insane (*qaḍī-i mā dīwāni ast*). Gīsūdarāz was drawn to this young mystic for the intellectual and spiritual quality of his thought, but also because the early Chishtīs highly regarded him.

Chishtī hagiographies that were composed for a more general readership, constitute another important reference on ʿAyn al-Quḍāt. It aught to be emphasized that for the early Chishtīs, interest in ʿAyn al-Quḍāt was to a great extent prompted by his relationship with Aḥmad Ghazzālī.[496] This was also the case in the hagiographies and the mystical literature of Iran and the Arabic-speaking world. The difference between these sources and those of the Indian Chishtīs is that the former did not elaborate much on Aḥmad Ghazzālī in the first place. For the most part, he was described as the younger brother of Abū Ḥāmid Ghazzālī. These sources, unlike those of the Chishtīs, cast Aḥmad in the shadow of his formidable brother. Naturally, in this body of literature ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, who was identified as the disciple of Aḥmad Ghazzālī, received even less attention. The Chishtīs, on the

[496] The later Chishtī generations found added interest in ʿAyn al-Quḍāt through a comparison of his life and his tragic end with that of an importan Chishtī mystic and martyr, Masʿūd Bakk (d. A.D. 1387).

contrary, celebrated Aḥmad Ghazzālī as a defining author of mystical literature. Ghazzālī's doctrine on *samāʿ*, specifically, was at the heart of the Chishtī canonical teachings.

Gīsūdarāz's commentary demonstrates that the author felt an intimate affinity with ʿAyn al-Quḍāt. Similar to him, Gīsūdarāz was an original thinker and an open-minded mystic who was receptive to varied expressions of faith and venues for acquiring knowledge. At a time when the Chishtī sufis were discouraged from learning any other language besides Persian and Arabic, Gīsūdarāz had acquired knowledge of Hindi, Deccani, and Sanskrit, which were considered the languages of the heathen and the polytheist. Moreover, he exercised an unconventional approach to writing that was in variance with the Chishtī stance on this subject. The Chishtī shaykhs did not favor writing, and our understanding of them is confined to the *malfūẓāt* (discourses) that their disciples, at a later point, committed to writing by having memorized the teachings and the sayings of their teachers. Gīsūdarāz was one of the first Chishtī who authored his own texts. He was a prolific writer and produced close to two hundred books in Arabic, Persian, and some in Deccani. *Sharḥ-i Tamhīdāt*, also known as *Sharḥ-i Zubdat al-Ḥaqāʾiq*, is among this important collection of original writings.[497]

Gīsūdarāz organized the commentary, after the *Tamhīdāt*, in ten chapters. Each section followed a large selection of passages from the corresponding chapter in the *Tamhīdāt*. The selections were those that Gīsūdarāz deemed important and/or complex. They included discussions on the verses from the *Qurʾān*, the mysteries of the unseen, the lights of Muḥammad and Satan, the opening of the heart as a stage in the process of illumination, mystical disciplines such as fasting and prayer, the wayfarer's attitude toward his body and its needs, mystical birth and death, faith, habitude, and *samāʿ*. The opening passage of

[497] Other titles by Khawāja Gīsūdarāz include the following:

(1) *Sharḥ Mashāriq al-Anwār* (A Commentary of the Rising Places of the Lights), (2) *Sharḥ ʿAwārif al-Maʿārif* (A Commentary on the Benefactions of Knowledge), (3) *Sharḥ Adab al-Murīd* (A Commentary on the Rules of the Novice), (4) *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* (A Commentary on the Bazels of Wisdom), (5) *Tarjumih Risālih Qushayriyih* (Translation of the Treatise of al-Qushayrī), (6) *Ḥaẓāʾir al-Quds* (The Enclosed Pastures of Holiness), (7) *Risālat Istiqāmat al-Sharīʿah bi-Ṭarīqat al-Ḥaqīqah* (A Treatise on How the Shariʿa Goes Straight by the Way of the Truth), (8) *Asmār al-Asrār* (Night Discourses on the Secrets), (9) *Maktūbāt Fārsī* (Persian Writings), (10) *Malfūẓāt Musammā bi-Jawāmiʿ al-Kalim* (A Book of Sayings Called Concise Aphorisms).

*Sharḥ-i Tamhīdāt* recaptures the opening lines of the *Tamhīdāt*, followed by the interpretation of the author.[498]

> "Follow the light that was sent down with him."[499] He called him light and called the book light also. He commanded all to follow that book and made the following of it as the following after Muḥammad. Therefore, He brought everything out in the same garb: Muḥammad as light, the book as light, and the one who was the follower of Muḥammad as light. And so it is light upon light. Hearken, and make your mind clear, these words are more delicate and subtle than what I am saying. Do you know what he is saying? The *Qurʾān* came from God and Muḥammad came from God. Muḥammad came from God in the same way as *Qurʾān* came from God. You call one uncreated: consider that jewel to be the amaranth of this jewel. This is a seemly metaphor. Since you are a man of gnosis, draw your heart hither and know that if by *Qurʾān* you understand the paper, ink, and the words, that is not the *Qurʾān*. There is a *Qurʾān* beyond this one, which this is a sign of. Also, Muḥammad, peace be upon him, has hands and feet and a body. But that is not Muḥammad. Muḥammad is beyond that as the source of mercy. The Qāḍī,[500] peace be upon him, is in accord with my sayings.

ʿAyn al-Quḍāt begins the *Tamhīdāt* with the central argument of his teachings that "everything is light." He appeals to Qurʾānic verses and explains that the scripture and the Prophet are manifestations of light. Gīsūdarāz opens the commentary by following closely the initial words of the *Tamhīdāt*. He proceeds by approaching the selections chronologically according to their order of appearance in the *Tamhīdāt*. Throughout the work Gīsūdarāz's methodology is to highlight the crucial concepts or phrases in each passage as the starting point of his discussion. The *Tamhīdāt* was an important text for Gīsūdarāz who regarded its teachings to be so profound and complex that he deemed the novice among his disciples incapable of approaching this text. Therefore, he forbade his beginning students access to the *Tamhīdāt* and used it in teaching those disciples who were experienced in mystical learnings. Gīsūdarāz's detailed and elaborate commentary on the *Tamhīdāt* was intended for such readers.

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[498] Gīsūdarāz, *Sharḥ Zubdat al-Ḥaqāʾīq al-Maʿrūf bi Sharḥ Tamhīdāt*, edited by ʿAṭā Ḥusayn (Hyderabad: Muʿīn Press, 1945), pp. 3–5.

[499] *Qurʾān*, 7: 157.

[500] Gīsūdarāz is referring to ʿAyn al-Quḍāt as *qāḍī*, meaning the judge. This term is the singular form of *quḍāt*, which is part of his name. In general, judge can mean scholar of religious law, or the judge of the needs of the humankind. In certain contexts this word has been used to refer to warriors who have sacrificed themselves for the cause of Islam.

### *Masʿūd Bakk*

Gīsūdarāz completed the commentary in Delhi where one of his fellow mystics named Masʿūd Bakk was also engaged in studying ʿAyn al-Quḍāt. Masʿūd Bakk whose full name was Shīr Khān Masʿūd Bakk Aḥmad Maḥmūd Nakhshabī Bukhārī, was a member of the nobility from the Bukhārā region in Transoxania. After experiencing a mystical state he abandoned his life of privilege, joined the Chishtī order in India, and spent the rest of his life there. Hagiographical sources associate Bakk with Shaykh Niẓām al-Dīn al-Awliyā' and identify him as the disciple of the Chishtī Shaykh Rukn al-Dīn ibn Shihāb al-Dīn Imām, next to whom he is resting in peace at the Lādū Sarāy district of Delhi.[501] It is common knowledge that Masʿūd was executed upon the order of his kinsman, King Fīrūzshāh Tughluq, but the dates of his birth and his death are not known. *Tārīkh Jāmiʾ Awlīyāʾ Dihlī* (The Comprehensive History of the Saints of Delhi) records his date of execution toward the end of the fourteenth-century.[502] Carl Ernst's analysis of the reception of Masʿūd Bakk in the medieval and the pre-modern Indian hagiographies, indicates that his execution must had occurred during the tumultuous final years of Fīrūzshāh Tughluq's reign, around A.D. 1387.[503]

Bakk was known and has been remembered as a poet, a mystic, a member of the nobility, and a martyr. His collection of poetry consists of about one thousand four hundred couplets on familiar mystical themes and motifs. A review of several manuscript copies of his poetry at libraries in Delhi and Hyderabad reveals that Bakk's poetry is on subjects that appear in the writing of most mystics, including ʿAyn al-Quḍāt. Through the collection, Bakk does not refer to ʿAyn al-Quḍāt by name. This is not the case with his prose treatises, *Mirʿat al-ʿĀrifīn* (The Mirror of the Gnostics), and *Umm al-Ṣaḥāʾif fī ʿAyn al-Maʿārif* (The Source of Books on the Source of Gnosis), which include several references to ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and his writing. Bakk's reputation as a

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[501] On September 27, 2008, Lādū Sarāy witnessed a horrific case of suicide bombing. The news coverage did not mention the existence of the shrines in close proximity to the site of the explosions at the Mehrauli market. ʿAbdal-Ḥaqq's remark that Bakk is resting in peace as a stranger, seems to still be valid in respect to the general public who does not pay enough attention to this remarkable mystic.

[502] *Tārīkh Jāmiʾ Awlīyāʾ Dihlī*, MS 28, ʿAsifiya Collection.

[503] Carl Ernst, "From Hagiography to Martyrology: Conflicting Testimonies to a Sufi Martyr of the Delhi Sultanate," *History of Religions*, 24.4 (May, 1985): 318.

poet cast a shadow of doubt on his abilities as an analytical writer.[504] A close reading of his prose literature refutes any such suspicion for his mystical prose was intended to instruct and enlighten advanced initiates and accordingly adhered to discursive and analytical methods of presenting mystical arguments.

The interest of Bakk in ʿAyn al-Quḍāt was acknowledged in the Chishtī biographical annals. These sources sealed the memory of Bakk as an ecstatic martyr and compared both his writing and his tragic end with the work and life of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt. A classical source in this genre is *Akhbār al-Akhyār fī Asrār al-Abrār* (The Tales of the Elite Concerning the Mysteries of the Holy Ones) composed by the famous sixteenth-century scholar and hagiographer ʿAbdal-Ḥaqq Muḥaddith ibn Ṣayf al-Dīn al-Qādirī al-Dihlawī. The following passage, which Ernst provides in his study of Bakk, is from ʿAbdal-Ḥaqq's entry on Bakk and his relationship with ʿAyn al-Quḍāt.

> He was in the extremity of intoxication, one of those intoxicated with the wine of unity, who smash their glasses in the wine-house of reality. He spoke intoxicated words; no one in the Chishti order had ever revealed the secrets of reality so blatantly or acted so intoxicated as he. They say that his tears were so hot that if they fell on one's hand it would be burned. He wrote many works on the science of Sufism and unification. He had one work named *Tamhidat*, based on the *Tamhidat* of ʿAy al-Qudat Hamadhani; many subtle realities are contained therein.[505]

*Umm al-Ṣaḥāʾif fī ʿAyn al-Maʿārif* is the text that ʿAbdal-Ḥaqq identifies as Bakk's *Tamhīdāt*. ʿAbdal-Ḥaqq was familiar with the work of Bakk and was not mistaken about the title of the treatise. A close reading of his entry on Bakk demonstrates that the treatise under consideration must had been known both as *Umm al-Ṣaḥāʾif* and the *Tamhīdāt*. ʿAbdal-Ḥaqq does not mention the title *Umm al-Ṣaḥāʾif* but quotes passages from this text, which he identifies as the *Tamhīdāt*. Through the text, Bakk refers to himself by the title of Darwīsh. This has resulted in cataloging *Umm al-Ṣaḥāʾif* in the Aṣifiyya index of manuscripts under "Darwīsh" as its author. In one place, ʿAbdal-Ḥaqq compares Bakk's two treatises *Mirʿat al-ʿĀrifīn* and *Tamhīdāt* as follows:[506]

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[504] Gīsudarāz, *Maktūbāt*, edited by ʿAṭā Ḥussain (Hyderabad: n. p., 1943), pp. 124-33. This letter provides a prime example in Bakk's capacity for discursive and analytical reasoning. Some scholars have argued that the letter must had been written by Gīsūdarāz and addressed to Bakk.

[505] Carl Ernst, "From Hagiography to Martyrology", pp. 319–20.

[506] ʿAbdal-Ḥaqq ibn Sayf al-Dīn al-Turk al-Dihlawī al-Bukhārī, *Akhbār al-Akhyār fī Asrār al-Abrār,* MS 99, Catalogue no. 1, Tarājima, Fārsī, (Hyderabad: Andhra

> These passages are sufficient in attesting his learning and perfection. He has organized the book [*Mirʿat al-ʿĀrifīn*] in fourteen unveilings and described the reality of the soul in the fourteenth unveiling. Indeed the amount of knowledge that he outlines in this book is not as much as in the other book.

This remark is additional evidence that ʿAbdal-Ḥaqq was well familiar with the texts that he identifies as Bakk's mystical treatises. Moreover, the fact that his entry does not include any reference to the title *Umm al-Ṣaḥāʾif* means that he is referring to the same text as the *Tamhīdāt*. The narrative by ʿAbdal-Ḥaqq and the evidence from Bakk's own writing, demonstrate that both titles were used in referring to the same treatise. Bakk uses these titles interchangeably through his writing. The following from the beginning of the manuscript where Bakk initiates his discussion identifies the ensuing text as *Umm al-Ṣaḥāʾif fī ʿAyn al-Maʿārif*, and the *Tamhīdāt*.[507]

> This compilation was written upon the request of friends who are seeking the unveilings of the realities of the divine knowledge and the infinite mysteries. It was named *Umm al-Ṣaḥāʾif fī ʿAyn al-Maʿārif*, so that it would be a companion to the travellers on the straight path and a nectar to the thirsty for the beauty of eternity. It is my hope that the concealed mysteries in *Umm al-Kitāb* are expressed through this ink and manifest to the sight of observing the witnessing of those meanings. The testament of Darwīsh is to not disclose this book of mysteries to the uninitiated who are not aware of the secrets of the intrinsic mysteries and are content with mere science, and to not expose this excellent sublime to the mimicking pretenders who driven by the blindness of envy have shut the eyes of fairness and unrolled the tongue of mockery against the beholders of the truths. That is because the perception of mysteries requires a pure heart, focused mind, and intact reason. And this intention is not found in the pretenders and the lighthearted. The stage is that of study, striving, and diligence, which consists of the disciple and the teacher. That is why they have said "Witnessing without the striving is as martyrdom without the battle. This secret of his cannot be unveiled as his most exalted saying, 'Those who strive in our (cause),

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Pradesh Oriental Manuscripts Library and Research Institute), p. 190. The phrase comparing the two texts is not available in MS 33. The edited copy of the manuscripts includes the phrase, "in the other book," but does not note its omission in one of the mansucript copies. See, *Akhbār al-Akhyār fī Asrār al-Abrār*, Vol. 320, edited by ʿAlīm Ashraf Khān (Tehran: Danishgāh Tihrān Anjuman Āthār wa Mafākhir Farhnagī, 2005), p. 337.

[507] Masʿūd Bakk, *Umm al-Ṣaḥāʾif fī ʿAyn al-Maʿārif*, MS 1444, Catalogue no. 1, Taṣawwuf Fārsī, (Hyderabad: Andhra Pradesh Oriental Manuscripts Library and Research Institute), pp. 1–2.

> we will certainly guide them to our paths."[508] The introduction to the *Tamhīdāt* ...

Bakk employs the word *tamhīdāt*, in the sense that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt employs the term, in categorizing the discussions as introductions to mystical meanings. The title *Umm al-Ṣaḥāʾif*, on the other hand, resonates with *Umm al-Kitāb* (The Source of the Book) that appears in the prelude. It is the title of the tablet of the divine decrees and the first chapter of the *Qurʾān*. In the present context, *Umm al-Ṣaḥāʾif* refers to the teachings that are revealed to a pure heart by divine sources. *Umm al-Ṣaḥāʾif* echoes these learnings through the discussion of the secrets of the unseen. In this manner, Bakk compares his writing with the divine scriptures that are the source and the mother of all writing. Bakk's addressee is a reader who has the spiritual maturity and insight to perceive the meaning of the secrets that he is describing. Referring to himself as Darwīsh, Bakk states that it is the testament of Darwīsh that *Umm al-Ṣaḥāʾif* is kept from those who are not fit to approach the knowledge that it contains. His apprehension is in line with the concern that Gīsūdarāz expresses about protecting from the uninitiated the *Tamhīdāt* of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, and some of his own writing. Their attitude of secrecy is different from ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's self-conscious regret in the *Tamhīdāt* that he is revealing secrets, which he is forbidden to discuss with others. In the case of Bakk, he is not concerned about disclosing secrets but is worried that his words will reach those who are not qualified to read them. Therefore, he entrusts his will and his writing to a community of the connoisseurs who are clearly his chosen addressees. A community who will safeguard texts such as Bakk's *Umm al-Ṣaḥāʾif* attests that Bakk, and also Gīsūdarāz, composed some of their writing for an elite community of mystic scholars among the Chishtīs. In the case of *Umm al-Ṣaḥāʾif*, the small number of the surviving manuscript copies is an indication of the limited circulation of this text. There are two manuscript copies of *Umm al-Ṣaḥāʾif* at the Aṣifiyya collection.[509] My attempts to find other

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[508] *Qurʾān*, 29: 69.

[509] Bakk, *Umm al-Ṣaḥāʾif fī ʿAyn al-Maʿārif*, MS 202, Catalogue no. 1, Taṣawwuf Fārsī, (Hyderabad: Andhra Pradesh Oriental Manuscripts Library and Research Institute), p. 371. The scribe's signature on the final page of one of the copies reads as follows: "This copy of *Umm al-Ṣaḥāʾif* is completed on the twentieth of the month of fasting, that is the blessed month of *ramaḍān*, in the year A.H. 1320. This *Umm al-Ṣaḥāʾif* was copied in my pen, the humble wretch, Mīr Aḥmad ʿAlī." The scribe of

surviving copies of the manuscript at locations in India were unsuccessful. The Aṣifiyya manuscripts were copied late at the turn of the twentieth century with an eleven years space between them: MS 1444 was copied in A.D. 1892, and MS 202 in A.D. 1902.[510] The earlier copies of *Umm al-Ṣaḥāʾif* are either extinct or yet to be found.

The stylistic and thematic influence of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt on Bakk is most readily seen in *Umm al-Ṣaḥāʾif* or the *Tamhīdāt*. Bakk marks the "introduction to the *Tamhīdāt*" as the beginning of the ensuing chapters in the text. This choice of vocabulary is not coincidental for there are plenty of instances in the text that confirm the influence of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's Tamhīdāt on the author. Similar to this book, Umm al-Ṣaḥāʾif is divided into ten introductions (*tamhīdāt*) as follows: (1) Introducing the Reality of Affection (2) Introducing the Reality of Love (3) Introducing that in the Eyes of the Witnesses of the Unseen, Umm al-Kitāb (The Source of the Book) is Manifest in Every Word (4) Introducing the Reality of the Humankind (5) The First Part in Regard to the Sending of the Letters of the Alphabet to Adam (6) The Second Part in Regard to the Sent Words (7) Introducing the Stages of Wayfaring (8) Introducing the Mute Remembering of the Saying that Peace be Upon Him is not Manifest *Dhikr* (9) Introducing True Infidelity, and (10) Introducing That True Faith also Has Stages. These chapters investigate the distinction between appearance and reality, and reason and knowledge by presence. In *Umm al-Ṣaḥāʾif*, Bakk appeals to ʿAyn al-Quḍāt in order to support his own discussions. This is how the objective of his approach is different from that of Gīsūdarāz in his analysis of the teachings of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt. Bakk pays careful attention to the process of transmission of learning from the teacher to the disciple and from the author to the reader. Accordingly, *Umm al-Ṣaḥāʾif* is to transmit Bakk's divine learnings to the reader. Bakk compares this manuscript with divine texts, which have an exterior and an interior reality that make their message susceptible to varied degrees of interpretation.[511] *Umm al-Ṣaḥāʾif* argues that the understanding of the intrinsic meaning of such texts is contingent upon one's dedication to learning and to striving on the mystical path

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the other manuscript copy is Mullā ʿUmar Ghaznawī Ḥanīfī Chishtī. His signature follows a verbatum quotation of ʿAbdal-Ḥaqq and the reference to ʿAyn al-Quḍāt.

[510] MSS 202 and 1444 are the two copies that I was able to find and examine at the Andhra Pradesh Oriental Manuscripts Library and Research Institute in Hyderabad.

[511] Bakk, MS 1444, pp. 1–2.

in order to find the way into the heart where visionary witnessing may or might not occur.

An intriguing moment in *Umm al-Ṣaḥāʾif* is Bakk's description of his own spiritual initiation into the rank of those who receive knowledge through visionary witnessing. His narrative resonates with ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's when he uses the imagery of light and Qurʾānic verses to describe his seclusion with Aḥmad Ghazzālī and the meeting with the Prophet Muḥammad. Bakk depicts himself in the company of the Prophet Muḥammad and four teachers and guides, two of whom are unknown to him. He identifies the other as Shihāb al-Dīn [Rukn al-Dīn ibn Shihāb al-Dīn Imām], and the teacher of his time Naṣīr al-Dīn [Naṣīr al-Dīn Chirāgh Dihlī].[512] They are respectively the teachers of Bakk and Gīsūdarāz. The Prophet Muḥammad, whom he refers to as the pillar of faith, is seen following the group. Bakk sees himself trailing after them when he is ceased with a strange mood that makes him bewildered with love. At this instant, he perceives that the enlightenment of the soul is through the light of these four who are the repository of the light of Muḥammad. Longingly, he wonders if he would be allotted a portion of their light.[513]

> Would a ray from the radiance of their light reach this wretch from that pole of life who is "a blessed tree, an olive, neither of the East nor of the West,"[514] from the light of the lamp that is in this four-fold glass of the brilliant star. He, in its niche is the pillar of faith and the pole of the universe. How would I know if this mad-man will receive a radiance of that light or not and if he will become its moth or not.

Conveying this event through Qurʾānic verses and visions of light, Bakk continues with explaining that his five senses leave him emancipated and he approaches the divine assembly. One of the shaykhs calls him nigh, draws him close to his chest, and little by little kindles the light of his soul with the candle-light of the truth. This shyakh then touches his breast three times and opens the treasure chest of his heart and soul. Thereby, Bakk attains the light of *walāyat*, which in this context means mystical union with God. This event endows him with the knowledge of divine teaching. Bakk and ʿAyn al-Quḍāt receive the light through the intervention of their shaykhs. In the case of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, the event with Aḥmad Ghazzālī leads to

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[512] Ibid., pp. 5–6.
[513] Ibid., pp. 4–5.
[514] *Qurʾān*, 24: 35.

the opening of the eye of insight, which sets him on the path of visionary witnessing and prepares him for the unmediated meeting with the Prophet Muḥammad. In the *Tamhīdāt*, he explains that he can endure the portion of the light that the Prophet bestows upon him. In a similar manner, Bakk is chosen as the recipient of the light of Muḥammad that the Shaykh in his vision instills in him. This scene is reminiscent of the relationship between ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and his mentor and the subsequent opening of his eye of insight. Bakk refers to ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and his *Tamhīdāt* at several places in this manuscript and in *Mirʿat al-ʿĀrifīn*.

The writings of Bakk and Gīsūdarāz confirm that the Chishtiī elite and the order's defining authors were engaged in studying and discussing ʿAyn al-Quḍāt. This was clearly the case in the generation of Bakk and Gīsūdarāz who belonged to the Delhi intellectual milieu. The work of these authors had an enduring influence on the following Chishtī generations.

### *Mīrān Jī Ḥusayn Khudānamā*

More than two centuries after the passing of Gīsūdarāz, Mīrān Jī Ḥusayn Khudānamā (d. 1668/1078) authored an expansive translation and analysis of Gīsūdarāz's commentary on the *Tamhīdāt*. Mīrān Jī was an important Chishtī shaykh of Hyderabad who rose to this status from a secular background. His initiation into mysticism appear to had been foreordained. He was a civil servant in charge of the cavalry in the government of Sultan ʿAbdullāh Quṭb Shāhī (r. A.D. 1625–72) who acknowledged his professionalism and promoted him to responsibilities that were reserved for his intimate deputies. Once he appointed Mīrān Jī to the court of Ibrāhīm ʿĀdil Shāh in Bījāpūr.[515] Mīrān Jī completed his assignment in a few days and was preparing to leave for Hyderabad when he learned that the famous local mystic Shāh Amīn al-Dīn ʿAlī (d. A.D. 1705) had come out of his forty-day-seclusion (*khalwa)* and was accepting visitors.[516] Mīrān Jī went to visit

[515] ʿAbd al-Jabbār Khān Malkāpūrī Ḥydirābādī, *Maḥbūb Ḍū al-Minan fī Tadhkirat Awlīyāʾ Deccan*, vol. 1 (Hyderabad: Raḥmān Press, 1900), p. 955.

[516] Ibid., pp. 116–20. Shaykh Amīn al-Dīn ʿAlī, also known as Amīn al-Dīn ʿAlāʾ was the son of Burhān al-Dīn Jānam ibn Mīrān Jī Shams al-ʿUshshāq and belonged to a family of saints with great following in Bījāpur. Amīn al-Dīn received his initiation robe (*khirqa*) from his father Burhān al-Dīn Jānam and replaced him as the religious leader in that area. He authored several treatises including the famous *Chakī Nāmā* (The Book of Handgrinder). Amīn al-Dīn was believed to have been born a saint and

the Shaykh and in the few hours that he spent in his presence, he entered the state of annihilation.[517] Consequently, he became a disciple of Shaykh Amīn al-Dīn ʿAlī who in due time sent him back to Hyderabad to teach the disciples in that area. Mīrān Jī's title, Khudānamā (showing God) is in reference to his reputation as a teacher who enlightened many on the path of God.[518] Mīrān Jī's commentary on the *Tamhīdāt* was aptly titled *Sharḥ-i Sharḥ-i Tamhīdāt* (The Commentary on the Commentary of the Tamhīdāt). It was composed in Deccani, a dominant language of the South, and made available to a large readership especially in Bījāpūr and Hyderabad. Mīrān Jī's commentary consisted of translated passages from the *Tamhīdāt* of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and the commentary of Gīsūdarāz. It is accurate to say that his work was a Deccani rendition of the commentary by Gīsūdarāz. Through his writing, Mīrān Jī often refers to Gīsūdarāz by name in order to distinguish between his comments and those of Gīsūdarāz. The original manuscript copy of *Sharḥ-i Sharḥ-i Tamhīdāt* is available at the Salar Jung Museum Manuscript Library in Hyderabad. This copy was produced in A.H. 1066 (A.D. 1656), twelve years before the death of the author.[519] A second copy dated A.H. 1182 (A.D. 1768) is available at the same library.[520] The following sample passage from this text is translated into English from the Urdu translation of the original Deccani.[521]

> God said do anything that Muhammad orders. I have sent him for the purpose of guiding you. O friend, you see the black letters of the *Qurʾān* on white paper. That is the appearance of the *Qurʾān*, which is the words of God. Light is not visible in those black lines; they are called created. O dear, you have not heard the proverb that a king cannot mount a horse without its having been saddled and made ready, and the horse standing still and accepting that. This means that lest one reaches the love of the teacher, the love of God cannot be seen.

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miracles were attributed to him. The author of *Tadhkirat Awlīyāʾ Deccan*, remarks that he was the teacher of Mīrān Jī Khudānamā. He died on 21 Ramadan, (d. A.D. 1705/A.H 1116) and is buried in Bijapur.

[517] Ibid., pp. 956–57.

[518] Ibid., p. 957.

[519] Mīrān Jī Ḥusayn Khudānamā, *Sharḥ-i Sharḥ-i Tamhīdāt*, MS 132. This copy has 233 folios.

[520] MS 133 is available in 195 folios.

[521] Professor Muḥammad Athar kindly provided me with the Urdu translation that I subsequently translated into English.

> If you do not have any love for the creator, then allow the love of the creatures. It means, not having the endurance for perceiving God, then one should first strive toward knowing oneself. That is why, these words mean that the sun is giving by nature and its light is illuminating. It means that the friend is the giver and the bestower of goodness. But this love induces temptation. In other words, the affection of the beloved sets the lover aglow. In his separation there is also a station where the lover cannot live without the beloved. It means, how the lover sees the face of the beloved gives light to his eyes and makes him assume the qualities of the beloved.

This is a representative passage that appears in the Salar Jung catalogue description of the manuscript and also in *Deccan min Urdu* (Urdu in Deccan), which provides a comprehensive survey of the development of Urdu language and high literary culture in the South. This compilation is edited and commented on by Naṣīr al-Dīn Hāshimī who is also the co-editor of the Salar Jung Catalogue of Urdu Manuscripts. Naṣīr al-Dīn Hāshimī makes an interesting mistake in both sources when he introduces Mīrān Jī's commentary of the *Tamhīdāt*: he ascribes the *Tamhīdāt* to Aḥmad Ghazzālī instead of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt.[522] This is an indication that up to this date ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and Aḥmad Ghazzālī remain closely linked in the literary culture of the Deccan.

Other Indian authors whose writing involved ʿAyn al-Quḍāt were ʿAṭā Ḥussain and Syed Shah Khusro Hussaini. Their interest in ʿAyn al-Quḍāt was prompted by Gīsūdarāz's relationship with him. In the 1950's ʿAṭā Ḥussain edited and published manuscript copies of some works by Gīsūdarāz, including *Sharḥ Zubdat al-Ḥaqāʾīq al-Maʿrūf bi Sharḥ Tamhīdāt*. The brief but informative introduction to the text listed the manuscript copies that ʿAṭā Ḥussain was able to access in completing the edition. The editor reiterated that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt held an important place in the writing of Gīsūdarāz. In the late 1970s, Syed Shah Khusro Hussaini published *Sayyid Muhammad al-Ḥusaynī-i Gīsūdirāz (721/1321–1422): on Sufism*, which pointed to the

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[522] Naṣīr al-Dīn Hāshmī, *Deccan Mīn Urdū*, 2d ed., (New Delhi: Qūmī Ku Nasl Barāʾī Furūq Urdū Zabān, 2002), p. 163.

> He [Mīrān Jī Ḥasan Khudānamā] composed several treatises in Deccani or Urdu language, among which the *Commentary on Hamadhānī Tamhīdāt* or *Tamhīdāt Commentary* is noteworthy. He was also interested in poetry. The *Commentary on Hamadhānī Tamhīdāt* is a book of mysticism, which is the translation of the composition of Shaykh Aḥmad, the brother of Imām Ghazzālī.

significance of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt for Gīsūdarāz. Sahib Hussaini who is currently the Chishtī religious leader in Gulbarga of Deccan, highlighted the significance of *samāʿ* for the Chishtīs. The following chapter will concern itself with *samāʿ* in the work of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and his teacher Aḥmad Ghazzālī.

CHAPTER SIX

# SAMĀʿ

The word *samāʿ* is derived from the Arabic root "*s-m-ʿ*" and means "to listen." It is a technical term, which in the present context refers to singing, dancing, and listening to music as spiritually emotive stimulants. The Chishtīs considered *samāʿ* to be an important medium for connecting with the spiritual realms. In fact, practicing *samāʿ* has been one of the distinguishing tenants of the Chishtī order. The early Chishtī scholars esteemed ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and Aḥmad Ghazzālī for their discussion of *samāʿ* as a form of anamnesis or recollection of the instance of the covenant as a theophanic experience. Masūʿd Bakk who was famous for his fondness of *samāʿ*, provided valuable insight on dying as a consequence of *samāʿ*. He explained that this death occurred on the fringes of a cosmos that the wayfarer entered by means of *samāʿ*. This cosmos consisted of twelve constellations and seven planets that paralleled the twelve scales and the seven melodies of music.[523] The wayfarer went on his/her introvert *miʿrāj* (nocturnal travel) into this space by listening to music; which similar to *Burāq* served as a vehicle for the journey into the unseen spheres. The first song that invoked the soul to embark on its passage was related to the Moon, the second to Mercury, the third to Venice, the fourth was related to the Sun, the fifth to Mars, the sixth to Jupiter, and the seventh to Saturn. In this manner, Bakk explained *samāʿ* as the wayfarer's attunement to the vibrations of a cosmic reality. These planets and their corresponding constellations marked the proximity of the wayfarer to the homeland. The traveller who reached Saturn was at a point of no-return. He had gone far away from his earthbound existence and come so close to the instance of the covenant that his state could be defined in terms of a dying at the instance of having been born. At this stage, his soul was completely freed from his body and he was able to hear the words of the Truth. This kind of hearing eliminated the movement that overtook the body in *samāʿ* (*hazat*). The stillness of his body was a sign that his *samāʿ* had become permanent. That meant, the one who heard

[523] Masʿūd Bakk, *Marʾat al-ʿĀrifīn*, edited by Abū Rajā Muḥammad ʿAbdal-Qadīr (Hyderabad: Matbaʿ-i Mufīd, 1892), pp. 162–63.

(*mustamiʿ*) had become one with the one who caused him to hear (*musmiʿ*).

There were other Muslims who saw the affective quality of *samāʿ* as an opportunity for Satan to accost the human kind and lead him/her astray. The discussion of *samāʿ* and its permissibility concerned mystics, theologians, jurists, and commentators of the *Qurʾān* and the *ḥadīth*. Traditionists and jurisprudents Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī (A.D. 810–870) and Abū al-Ḥusayn Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj al-Nayshābūrī (A.D. 817/821–75) collected detailed records on the treatment of *samāʿ* by the Prophet and his companions. Al-Qushayrī whose encyclopedic compilation of mystical concepts was the subject of a commentary by Khawāja Banda Nawāz Gīsūdarāz, was frequently cited by those Muslim mystics who established the theoretical basis for the debate on *samāʿ*. Al-Qushayrī's entry on *samāʿ* traced this discourse among Muslim scholars and theologians to the eight-century. By the tenth-century, the discussion of samāʿ had become prevalent and during the time of al-Qushayrī, the eleventh-century, it was treated as an established theme in mystical and religious texts.

The first Muslim mystic who introduced *samāʿ* to his followers in India was Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn Uthmān al-Jullābī al-Hujwīrī (d. A.D. 1072/1077), best known as the author of the oldest Persian treatise on mysticism, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb Li-Arbāb al-Qulūb* (The Unveiling of the Concealed for the People of the Heart). He was born in Hujwīr in Ghazna, traveled extensively in the region, and after a long stay in Iraq ended up in India.[524] Al-Hujwīrī settled in Lahore where he completed the *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, his only surviving text.[525] His scholarship had a

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[524] Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-Mahjub: The Oldest Persian Treatise on Sufism*, translated by Reynold A. Nicholson (Lahore: Islamic Book Foundation, 1976), pp. xviii, 91. Nicholson explains that Hujwīrī did not move to Lahore on his own volition but was taken there as a prisoner against his will. As a result he lost access to his books, which were left behind and had difficulty completing *Kashf al-Mahjub*. Nicholson's translation of the text reads:

> My Shaykh had further traditions concerning him, but I could not possibly set down more than this (*andar waqt-i man ḍiqi būd ū az in mumkin na-shūd*), my books having been left at Ghazna—may God guard it!—while I myself had become a captive among uncongenial folk (*dar miyān-i nājinsān*) in the district of Lahāwu, which is a dependency of Mūltān. God be praised both in joy and sorrow!

[525] Ibid., pp. xix–xx. *Kashf al-Mahjub* is Hujwīrī's only surviving text but he authored several others. Nicholson provides the following background on Hujwīrīs writing.

> In the introduction to the *Kashf al-Mahjūb* al-Hujwīrī complains that two of his former works had been given to the public by persons who erased his name from

significant impact on later mystics who wrote on the subject of *samāʿ*. The Ghazzālī brothers aspired to Hujwīrī. Aḥmad Ghazzālī's classical treatise on *samāʿ* entitled *Bawāriq al-Ilmāʿ fī al-Radd ʿAlā Man Yuḥarrimu al-Samāʿ* (The Lightning-Flashes of Indication Concerning the Refutation of Those Who Declare Audition Forbidden in General), established him as a defining authority on this subject. The early Chishtīs appealed to Ghazzālī in their development of the discourse of *samāʿ*. Bruce Lawrence explains:

> There are two extant treatises on *samāʿ*, one in Arabic by a disciple of the foremost Chishtī saint of Delhi, Nizām ad-dīn Badāʿūnī (Awliyā), the other in Persian by Ṣūfī Hamīd ad-dīn Nāgurī, a successor to the first Indian Chishtī Shaykh, Muʿin ad-dīn Sanjarī Ajmerī. Both *Uṣūl as-samāʿ* and *Risālah-e samāʿ* contrast with one another but even more with the sole extant treatise from an early non-Indian devotee of *samāʿ*.[526]

Lawrence is referring to *Bawārīq al-Ilmāʿ*, which he identifies as the most important theoretical treatise on *samāʿ*. The early Chishtī authors considered this text as a theoretical manifesto on *samāʿ*. In his analysis Lawrence observes that Marijan Molé gives prominence to only four Indian authors as the significant theorists of *samāʿ*: ʿAlī Hujwīrī,

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the title-page, and pretended that they themselves were the authors. In order to guard against the repetition of this fraud, he has inserted his own name in many passages of the present work. His writings, to which he has occasion to refer in the *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, are—

1. A *divān* (p. 2).
2. *Minhāj al-din*, on the method of Ṣūfism (p. 2). It comprised a detailed account of the Ahl-i Ṣuffa (p. 80) and a full biogrpahy of Ḥusayn b. Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj (p. 153).
3. *Asrār al-khiraq wa ʾl-manʾūnāt*, on the patched frocks of the Ṣūfīs (p. 56).
4. *Kitāb-i fanā ū baqā*, composed "in the vanity and ranshness of youth" (p. 60).
5. A work, of which the title is not mentioned, in explanation of the sayings of Ḥusayn b. Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj (p. 153).
6. *Kitāb al-bayān li-ahl al-ʿiyān*, on union with God (p. 259).
7. *Baḥr al-qulūb* (p. 259).
8. *Al-Rʿāyat li-ḥuqūq Allah*, on the Divine unity (p. 280).
9. A work, of which the title is not mentioned, on faith (p. 286).

None of these books has been presevred.

[526] Bruce B. Lawrence, "The Early Chishtī Approach to Samāʿ," in *Islamic Society and Culture: Essays in Honour of Professor Aziz Ahmad*, edited by Milton Israel and N.K. Wagle (New Delhi: Manohar, 1983), pp. 74–75.

Gīsūdarāz, ʿAlī Hamadhānī, and Muḥammad Nūrullāh.[527] Lawrence focuses on the contributions of other Chistī authors whose discussions on *samāʿ* were recorded in the form of independent essays, chapters in hagiographies and religious books, and oral conversations that appeared in the *malfūẓāt* (discourses).[528] These sources also paid homage to Aḥmad Ghazzālī and acknowledged his authority in the discussion of *samāʿ*. This is a strong indication of the breath and depth of Ghazzālī's influence on the Chishtī authors.

*Samāʿ* as a Muslim spiritual practice was taken to India by mystics from other lands. The founder of the Chishtī order in India, Khawāja Muʿīn al-Dīn Muḥammad Ḥasan Sijzī Chishtī (A.D. 1142–1236), similar to his precursor Hujwīrī, was an avid lover of music who came to India as a foreigner. He was born in Sistān or Sījīistān (in present-day Iran) and went to India in A.D. 1193. In contrast to the members of the Suhrawardī order who shunned the practice of *samāʿ*,[529] he held *samāʿ* sessions in his house and listened to music every evening.[530] Muʿīn al-Dīn and his disciples institutionalized *samāʿ* among the Chishtīs.[531] Their effort was reinforced by a wealth of theoretical writing that was produced by the later generations of the Indian Chishtīs among whom Gīsūdarāz and Masʿūd Bakk receive special recognition.

The opponents of *samāʿ* argued that it distracted the soul from God and incited in it fanciful passions that were in tune with the desires and deceptions of the ego. Those in support of *samāʿ* stated that it was a medium for elevating the soul into the spiritual realms where it was susceptible to varied spiritual awakenings. Al-Qushayrī defined *samāʿ* as the pleasant voice/sound, which is an ornament of the *Qurʾān* and

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[527] Ibid., pp. 72–73. Cf. Marijan Molé, "La Danse extatique en Islam," in *Sources Orientales*, no. 6, edited by Denise Bernot, Anne-Marie Esnoul, et al. (Paris: Seuil, 1963), pp. 147–280. Marijan Molé is another scholar who provides valuable information on the reception of *samāʿ* among the early Chishtī. Her analysis identifies a few authors as the authority in this domain.

[528] Lawrence, "The Early Chishtī Approach to Samāʿ," p. 74.

[529] Ibid., pp. 80–81. Bruce Lawrence expresses astonishment that both Abū Najīb al-Suhrawardī and his nephew Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī, who were, to use the author's words, "direct spiritual descendants of Aḥmad Ghazzālī," are said to had been disinclined toward *samāʿ*. He suggests that their own mystical experiences or pressure from the Muslim community could be factors in determining their attitude.

[530] Hussaini, *Sayyid Muḥammad al-Ḥusaynī-i Gīsūdirāz*, p. 122.

[531] The Suhrawardīs were the disciples and the followers of Shihāb al-Dīn Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar Suhrawardī. The consensus is that members of this order did not favor *samāʿ*, even though there are references to sporadic instances to the contrary.

a sign from God.[532] Like al-Bukhārī and Hujwīrī, he explained that people are drawn to beautiful sounds; children become calm and peaceful upon hearing music and song; and certain animals, like the camel, bear heavy burdens on long and arduous journeys by hearing the songs of the driver.[533] Al-Qushayrī referred to his mentor Abū ʿAlī al-Daqqāq (d. A.D. 1015) who called attention to the interference of the ego (*nafs*) in *samāʿ* and explained that audition of music was forbidden for ordinary people because their ego had dominance over them and stimulated them toward vain fancies. Those persons who were aware of what a formidable companion and adversary the ego was, could engage with their ego by taking part in *samāʿ*. Therefore, *samāʿ* was permissible for the ascetics on account of their strivings on the path. It was favored for the mystics for the vitality of their hearts.[534] Qushayrī explained that *samāʿ* affected the soul and each member of the body. When it afflicted the sight it brought tears to it; the tongue it brought songs to; the hands it moved to rend the garment; and the feet it set to dancing.[535]

Aḥmad Ghazzālī defined music as the "arrangements of notes and spiritual analogies," which humans were innately drawn to. He explained that *samāʿ* awakened the heart of the mystic and took it toward God.[536] *Bawāriq al-Ilmāʿ* celebrated *samāʿ* as a medium for the transcendence of the soul. In this state, spiritual forces, which bore the presence of Satan, were tangible and audible. Considering that *Bawāriq al-Ilmāʿ* presented a rhetorical defence of *samāʿ* against its opponents, Ghazzālī avoided any direct reference to the instrumental role of Satan in the awakening of the soul. He hinted at this subject discreetly through the imagery of contrasting lights.

> When the bodily members are united in affairs which are suitable, the law of contention is removed, and the law of mutual agreement appears. Contention pertains to darkness and mutual agreement to light, and

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[532] Al-Qushayrī, *Al-Risāla al-Qushayrīya*, p. 469.

[533] Al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, edited by Maḥmūd ʿĀbidī (Tehran: Surūsh, 2004), pp. 584–85.

[534] Al-Qushayrī, *Al-Risāla al-Qushayrīya*, p. 472.

[535] Ibid., p. 482.

[536] Aḥmad Ghazzālī and ibn Abī al-Dunyā, *Tracts on Listening to Music: Being Dhamm al-Malāhī by Ibn abī 'l-Dunyā and Bawāriq al-Ilmāʿ by Majd al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī al-Ghazālī*, translated by James Robson (London: The Royal Asiatic Society, 1938), p. 72; henceforth, *Tracts on Listening to Music*.

> when the darkness is removed and the light spread abroad, matters and verities are revealed which could not be reached by a thousand efforts.[537]

Following after al-Qushayrī, Ghazzālī explained that music and singing freed the senses and allotted a portion of the secrets of the unseen to each bodily member. He based his discussion of *samāʿ* on the contrasting properties of harmony and discord or light and darkness. These contrasts complemented each other and enabled the wayfarer to distinguish between the cacophony of the ego and the affinity of the spiritual realms whose vibrations cleansed the heart. Satan had a share in the heart of mankind and was inevitably met when the heart was opened through *samāʿ*. Ghazzālī limited the discussion of this subject to the symbolism of contrasting lights. His objective was to defend and promote *samāʿ* against the objections of the jurists of his time who in comparison with the jurists of the past were like the cronies of the rulers in contrast to the "godly, energetic, and religious" saint/jurists.[538] Their judgement on *samāʿ* was groundless since "... if they blame the poor, saying that their audition is not permissible, they do not follow the provisos of the saints of the past. They are deserving of blame for not following what the godly jurists of the past were engaged in."[539] Ghazzālī welcomed the temptations of Satan in *samāʿ* since it was the "negative-guide" whom mystics like ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, Ghazzālī, and Manṣūr ibn al-Ḥallāj diligently pursued in gauging their own spiritual cohesion and in navigating their way toward the beloved. *Samāʿ* was an opportunity to rend the veils that separated these wayfarers from God.

### *Different Views on* Samāʿ*: Ibn Abī al-Dunyā and Aḥmad Ghazzālī*

It was agreed that *samāʿ* was a delicate issue. The traditionalists and the Sufi sects, the Naqshbandīa and the Qādarīa, considered *samāʿ* too dangerous and risky to try. Those mystics who engaged in *samāʿ* approached it as a sacred ritual that was performed under the supervision of a master. Junayd listed three conditions for *samāʿ*: time, place, and the brethren. *Samāʿ* sessions were to be held in specific physical and emotional environments, and in the company of individuals whose assembly perpetuated meditation on the divine.

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[537] Ibid., pp. 72, 123.
[538] Ibid., pp. 117–18.
[539] Ibid., p. 18.

*Samāʿ*, with all its attending dangers, was a sacred experience because it invoked the memory of the primordial covenant (*mithāq*) between man and God when God addressed His supreme creature with the question: "Am I not your Lord?"[540] In the terrestrial realm, *samāʿ* was conceived as an echo of that call.[541] Jalāl al-Dīn Rumī is renowned for his adherence to *samāʿ*, which he celebrated as the memory of the union between the lover and the beloved and the pledge of love that was exchanged between them. The *Tale of the Reed* (Nay Nāmih*)*, is a most expressive instance of this focus in the work of Rumī.[542] The central character of the poem is the musical instrument reed that laments its separation from its natural abode at home with the beloved. The opening lines of the poem invite the listener to hear this tale of love and separation: "Listen to the reed how it tells a tale, complaining of separations || Saying, 'Ever since I was parted from the reed-bed, my lament hath caused man and woman to moan."[543] This is how *Tale of the Reed* places *samāʿ* at the center of action in the poem. The voice of the reed is an echo of a durationless instance (*ān*) of union between the lover and the beloved. That instance is manifest in the voice of God, which reverberates through all of the creation.

Those who vouched for *samāʿ* were confronting the view that condemned it as a medium utilized by Satan to tempt man astray. The opponents of *samāʿ* even argued that its enjoyment was a sign for the approach of the end of time. Two classical authors on this debate were Abū Bakr ʿAbdallāh ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿUbaid ibn Abī al-Dunyā al-Qurashī al-Baghdādī (d. A.D. 823–94) and Aḥmad Ghazzālī. Their treatises appeared in James Robson's *Tracts on Listening to Music: Being Dhamm al-Malāhī by Ibn abī 'l-Dunyā* and *Bawāriq al-Ilmāʿ by Majd al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī al-Ghazālī*. Ibn Abī al-Dunyā and Ghazzālī argued their positions by relying on the *Qurʾān*, the tradition, the four schools of jurisprudence, and evidence from the life of the faithful. The following overview of their work provides a framework for understanding the significance of Aḥmad Ghazzālī and his student

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[540] *Qurʾān*, 7: 172.

[541] The soul of the humankind yearns for the voice of the beloved, which it accosts in the sound of music. Connection to the spiritual realms through audition of music was considered to exert healing effects not only on the soul but also the body. This is a subject that Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (d. A.D. 951) and Avicenna discussed in their writing.

[542] This powerful overture to the *Mathnawī* casts *samāʿ* as the occasion to remember the relationship between man and God.

[543] Rumi, "Nay Namih," translated by Reyonld A. Nicholson, *The Mathnawi of Jalaluʾddin Rumi*, vol. 2. (London: Luzac & Co. Ltd., 1926), p. 5.

ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, for the Chishtīs who remain devout practitioners of *samāʿ*.

*Dhamm al-Malāhī* (Censure of Instruments of Diversion) is the earliest treatise by a Muslim author condemning *samāʿ*. Ibn Abī al-Dunyā was an important figure in the Abbasid court; he was the tutor to the caliphs, al-Muʿtaḍid and his son al-Muktafī.[544] He composed several books on the principal vices that the pious must avoid. Audition of music was a great sin and a signal that would announce the coming of the Doomsday. At that time, those who entertained music, the author warned, will be metamorphosed into beasts.[545] Ibn Abī al-Dunyā began his treatise by referring to the Prophet who said that the end will be at hand when music and wine are permissible, and earthquakes swallow the creatures, stones shower from the sky, and humans change into beasts.

> "Among the last of my people there will be swallowing up, pelting, and metamorphosis." It was said, "O, apostle of Allāh, When?" He said, "When the *maʿāzif* and the *qaināt* appear, and wine is considered lawful." The *maʿāzif* are musical instruments (*ālāt al-ṭarab*), and the *qaināt* are the singing-girls. And as for the pelting, it is the throwing of stones [from the sky, just as they were sent on Lot's people, some on tribes and some on houses; and they will be sent on them] (ie. the people mentioned in the tradition).[546]

Ibn Abī al-Dunyā took as witness the house of the Prophet, the companions, important religious jurists, and state authority figures. He expanded on the subject of the metamorphoses and appealed to the status of Abū Huaira, one of the companions, who quoted the Prophet saying: "In the last time some of these people will be metamorphosed into apes and swine."[547] Those present asked how that could be possible when these people testify to the unity of God, believe in the legitimacy of His Prophet, and fulfill the duties prescribed by Islam. He answered that the Prophet confirmed that these people fast and pray and perform the pilgrimage but pointed out that "They have employed stringed instruments, tambourines (*dufūf*), and singing-girls, and spent the

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[544] *Tracts on Listening to Music*, p. 14.

[545] Ibid., p. 15. Robson lists the titles as follows: *Dham al-Ḥasad* (Censure of Envy), *Dham al-Dunyā* (Censure of the World), *Dham al-Ghaḍab* (Censure of Anger), *Dham al-Ghība* (Censure of Slander), *Dham al-Faḥsh* (Censure of Obscenity), *Dham al-Muskir* (Censure of Intoxicants), *Dham al-Malāhī* (Censure of Instruments of Diversion).

[546] Ibid., p. 19.

[547] Ibid., p. 22.

night at their drinking and their diversion, so in the morning they will have been metamorphosed into apes and swine." Ibn Abī al-Dunyā continued with similar descriptions of the grotesque end of these sinners. He expanded on other evils that involved music such as gambling, throwing dice, playing games like chess and backgammon, flying pigeons, fornication, and sodomy. He concluded that listening to music and songs corrupted the heart and distracted it from devotion to God.[548] He referred to the Umayyid caliph Yazīd ibn al-Walīd (d. A.D. 744), who warned his followers against music and singing on the grounds that these activities increased desire, decreased shame and inhibition, and destroyed manliness. If one could not avoid music, then he had to make sure to keep women and children away when listening to music because it stimulated sexual feelings. Music was intoxicating like wine, and could arouse erotic passions. Ironically, mystics used the same analogy of love, desire, and intoxication, to defend music as a medium for approaching God.

Juxtaposed against Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, Robson presents Aḥmad Ghazzālī and his manifesto in defence of music, *Bawāriq al-Ilmāʿ*. In contrast to Ibn Abī al-Dunyā's promise of the catastrophic visions of fear and the horrors of the Domesday, Ghazzālī begins the treatise by remembering the pledge of love between man and God. He uses this framework to set the stage for the discussion of *samāʿ*, which he defines as the echo of the voice of God during the covenance (*mithāq*). He explains that the soul remembers when God addressed it directly with the question "Am I not your Lord?" This memory attracts the soul to beautiful sounds and justifies the visceral longing of man for music and song. In this discussion, Ghazzālī defines dance as the symbolic expression for the jubilance and elation of the soul when God acknowledged its prominence in the scheme of creation.[549] Ghazzālī explains that all actions in *samāʿ* have a spiritual meaning. He describes the significance of different dance gestures that are conveyed through the movements of the hand, feet, and the head. Rending of one's clothes, whirling, or joining hands with another, are other topics that he elaborates.[550]

He provided a systematic description of *samāʿ* as a powerful medium for emancipating the soul from the body, thus preparing it to

[548] Ibid., p. 27.
[549] Ibid., p. 99.
[550] Ibid., p. 100.

receive the illuminations that appear as a result of listening to music. He used classical sources, including the writing of Qushayrī and Hujwīrī, to counter the objections of the dogmatic jurists against *samāʿ*. Ghazzālī called attention to the religious leaders of the early Islam who were close to the teachings of the Prophet and similar to him were fond of music and singing. He argued that the adversarial approach to *samāʿ*, which insisted on its prohibition, was in fact an indication of the wide popularity of music. Moreover, those who were deemed unfit to participate in *samāʿ*, such as women and the novice, had once been so much in the view that their visibility provoked this kind of reaction. The concluding pages of *Bawāriq al-Ilmāʿ* considered these issues in retrospect.

> As time went on, they permitted pious women who were of their number to look at them through windows and elsewhere, and [also allowed] their assembling with beardless youths who were pious, but not with others. Things went on like that till the common people imitated them, and the good was mingled with the corrupt, and the system was disordered. So everyone must look to his own state and what pertains to him and leave everything else, just like him who lives among the sick; so he must be occupied with himself alone. ... So it is now necessary for every pious person to apply himself to what is true and abandon what is vain. And similarly the audition which is approved among the saints is what we have mentioned. And when the good is mingled with the corrupt, every possessor of taste and ecstasy must apply himself to audition according to its established conditions, and not withdraw from it at the word of an objector and opponent, for that brings about the abandonment of imitating the saints ...[551]

Ghazzālī points out that *samāʿ* was a favored practice among the saints of God and the followers of the Prophet who even included women and the youth in the ceremony. Here, Ghazzālī is rhetorically referring to the final words of Hujwīrī on *samāʿ*, which are also the concluding passages in his *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*. Hujwīrī ends the last chapter, *Fī al-Samāʿ wa Bayān Anwāʿhu* (Concerning *Samāʿ* and Describing its Kinds) in the following intimate and confessional words. He states "I who am ʿAli ibn ʿUthmān al-Jullābī" prefer that the novice are not allowed into *samāʿ* sessions in order that their heart is not irritated by vile thoughts and they are not distracted from the path of God. Hujwīrī warns against the dangers of *samāʿ*, which include allowing women to

[551] Ibid., pp. 113–14.

look at men during *samāʿ*.[552] Ghazzālī takes this observation as an indication of the popularity of *samāʿ* and the strong presence of women and the novice at the sessions. He describes *samāʿ* as a sacred ritual that must be approached with care and attention and reiterates that there are conditions to be observed but ultimately everyone is responsible for their own conduct and should be left to themselves.

Following in the footsteps of Ghazzālī, Gisūdarāz interpreted the classical warning against the inclusion of the novice in *samāʿ* as an indication that the youth and the uninitiated were widely participating in *samāʿ* sessions and their presence prompted this discussion among the scholars of Islam. Gīsūdarāz explained that the warning was not to ban them from the *samāʿ* sessions but to discipline them against idle thoughts and fancies.[553] According to Gīsūdarāz, the novice should not be prevented from participation in *samāʿ* but must be supervised, made aware of this specific path, and instructed about its rituals. Gīsūdarāz emphasized specific conditions for "time, place, and brethren." It is noteworthy that he was more liberal in his approach to *samāʿ* than in his restrictive outlook on making ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's writing available to the initiates.

Ghazzālī provided detailed descriptions of his favorite musical instrument, the tambourine, which is an essential instrument in the Chishtī *samāʿ* gatherings and during the course of the *ʿurs* celebrations. Ghazzālī represents the tambourine as a living symbol for the "cycle of existing things."[554] The skin that covers this instrument is a symbol for "general existence," and striking it symbolizes "descent of the divine visitations" that reveal the realities of the essence. Accordingly, the sound of the tambourine invokes these visitations and makes audible the secrets of the soul. The five bells that are attached to the tambourine represent the ranks of the prophets, saints, apostles, caliphs, and the *imāms*. And "their combined sound is a reference to the appearance of the divine revelations and unrestricted knowledge by means of these realities in the hearts of saints and the people of perfection."[555] He explains that, *samāʿ* is necessary for the holy persons because they are detached from this world and ready to connect with the other. *Samāʿ* facilitates this transition.

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[552] Al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, p. 610.
[553] Hussaini, *Sayyid Muḥammad Al-Ḥusaynī-i Gīsūdirāz*, p. 129.
[554] *Tracts on Listening to Music*, p. 98.
[555] Ibid., p. 99.

## ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and Samāʿ

ʿAyn al-Quḍāt described *samāʿ* as a spiritual exercise that brought the wayfarer in contact with the illuminations of the divine realm. In the fourth chapter of the *Tamhīdāt*, "Know Yourself in Order to Know God," he spoke of *samāʿ* as a reality that involved the transformation of the heart when the light of God shined through the wayfarer and obliterated the fire of Satan. This experience was versified by some mystics who attested to the transformation while being in *samāʿ*.[556] It is sound to associate *samāʿ* with the relationship between ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and his teacher, Aḥmad Ghazzālī, and the event of the "opening of the inner sight" that he attributes to their Hamadhān meeting. Moreover, *samāʿ* seemed to have served as an occasion to bring these mystics in contact with their contemporary Chishtī Shaykh, Quṭb al-Dīn Mawdūd (d. A.D. 1133), an important figure among the early founders of the order in Chisht. He is a venerated saint who at the age of twenty–six, or according to some sources twenty–eight, replaced his father, Khawāja Yūsuf Chishtī, as the leader of the order. Mawdūd is said to have memorized the *Qur'ān* by the age of seven. Miracles that are attributed to him include resurrecting the dead and invoking in his disciples visions of the unseen.[557] It is known that when Abū Naṣr Aḥmad Jām (A.D. 1049–1141), who was a disciple of the famous Abū Saʿīd Abū al-Khayr, reached Herat, Mawdūd went to visit him. He spent three days with this master and received teachings from him.[558] This is the only travel by Mawdūd that is recorded in the biographical sources. The Chishtī sources associate the memory of Mawdūd with that of these Iranian mystics. Shaykh ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Chishtī (d. A.D. 1683), the author of the biographical dictionary *Mirʿat al-Asrār* (Mirror of Secrets) ranked Aḥmad Ghazzālī and ʿAyn al-Quḍāt among the principal teachers of the Chishtī order and placed them and Quṭb al-Dīn Mawdūd in the same category as the fourteenth generation of divine men after the Prophet.

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[556] *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 85, p. 63. He is referring to the famous mystic Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Qaṣṣāb who always recited the following lines in *samāʿ*: "We put a sight in the kernel of the eye || And fed it through the eye || Suddenly we chanced at the district of beauty || Now we are rid of both the sight and what is worth seeing."

[557] Niẓām al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Ṣiddīqī al-Ḥusainī, *Karāmāt al-Awlīyāʿ*, MS 123, Catalogue no. 505, Biographies, Persian (Hyderabad: Salar Jung Museum Library), pp. 396-98.

[558] Muḥammad Wālā Shukūh, *Safīnat al-Awlīyā' dar ʿIlm Sayr*, MS 22, Catalogue no. 496, Biographies, Persian, (Hyderabad: Salar Jung Museum Library), folio 201.

The possibility of relations among these mystics during their life time, in the twelfth-century, may be attested by evidence from the *Tamhīdāt*. At one place in the *Tamhīdāt* ʿAyn al-Quḍāt counts a person named Mawdūd among his Shaykhs, but he does not explain if he is Quṭb al-Dīn Mawdūd Chishtī. He identifies Mawdūd as an important Shaykh next to Shaykh Baraka, Aḥmad Ghazzālī, and Muḥammad Ghazzālī. This is the only time that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt mentions the name Mawdūd, which could indicate that although Mawdūd was an important member of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's milieu, he was among them so infrequently that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt did not mention him as often as the others. Mawdūd was a popular name in medieval Ghazna and Herat.[559] The Mawdūd of the *Tamhīdāt* was probably from that region rather than the Arab-speaking world, because he spoke Persian and ʿAyn al-Quḍāt remembered him by a verse of Persian poetry that he frequently recited. This evidence supports the argument that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt was probably referring to Quṭb al-Dīn Mawdūd Chishtī, from the region of Transoxania. In the introduction to *Sharḥ Tamhīdāt*, ʿAṭā Ḥussain reads the reference to Mawdūd as proof that Quṭb al-Dīn Mawdūd is the individual in focus.[560] The present study, however, remains cautious about drawing definitive conclusions based on ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's reference since biographical dictionaries and writings by other Chishtī mystics do not speak about contact between Quṭb al-Dīn Mawdūd and ʿAyn al-Quḍāt Hamadhānī. However, absence of recorded information on this subject does not refute its possibility for Mawdūd could very well have traveled westward to Iran, met with Aḥmad Ghazzālī and ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, and from there proceeded to Mecca on the same route that many of his predecessors had taken. The following will address the reference in the *Tamhīdāt* in light of these considerations.

*Tamhīdāt*, similar to *Miʾat al-Asrār*, lists ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, Mawdūd, and Aḥmad Ghazzālī together as the spiritual elite of its discourse. It describes them as the *rāsikhūn fī al-ʿilm*, or the firm authorities on the knowledge of God: the ones who observe the light of Muḥammad and Satan and express their visions through poetry. Against this background, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt introduces Mawdūd as his shaykh and even elevates him above Muḥammad Ghazzālī when he explains that

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[559] It was a name that was used in the Ghaznawīd court in that region. Mawdūd was the son of Masʿūd ibn Maḥmūd ibn Sabuktakīn.

[560] Gīsūdarāz, *Sharḥ Zubdat al-Ḥaqāʾīq*, p. 5.

he knew about the special relationship of Aḥmad, Mawdūd, and Baraka with God earlier than he perceived Muḥammad Ghazzālī is also one of them. Muḥammad Ghazzālī is the tenth Shaykh whom his invisible guides confirmed to be among the rank of the *rāsikhūn fī al-ʿilm*.[561] They were endowed with a knowledge that is neither of this earth nor of the heaven: it is found in the heaven of the heart of the choicest seekers. These people endured difficult spiritual practices in preparing their heart for receiving secrets of the unseen. Gīsūdarāz defines *rāsikhūn fī al-ʿilm* or *ʿulamāʾ bi-Allāh* to mean those who receive unmediated knowledge from God.[562] He pays homage to ʿAyn al-Quḍāt for pointing the seeker in the direction of the China of the heart for understanding who these people are. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt identifies the genesis of their knowledge to be the instance of the covenant when man accepted God's pledge of love. He explains that there is a place on the path when the wayfarer sees God in his heart as he sees himself in the light of God. At this juncture, the distinction between the lover and the beloved is obliterated. Poetry and *samāʿ* are effective mediums for cultivating the heart to accept this light. In order to further clarify this point ʿAyn al-Quḍāt cites the following verse by Aḥmad Ghazzālī:[563]

> O God, the mirror of your beauty is this heart.
> Our soul is rose petal and your love like the nightingale.
> In the beauty of your light I see myself without a self
> Thus in this world every one's intent is he himself.

These lines, an interpretation of the *ḥadīth* "The believer is the mirror of the believer" (*al-mūʾminu mirātuʾl-mūʾmina*), provide the occasion for ʿAyn al-Quḍāt to reiterate that Aḥmad Ghazzālī, Mawdūd, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt himself, and his other shaykhs, saw themselves and each other reflected in the mirror of their hearts. Their self-identification with one another and with God had a qualitative effect on their perception of the unseen in which they saw their oneness with and separation from God. This kind of understanding earned them the title *rāsikhūn fī al-ʿilm* because they were set on the path of constantly striving for a higher truth that removed them from their stance of separation and took them closer to union. This visionary mode of understanding defined their interpretation of faith and infidelity. The

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[561] *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 366, pp. 281–82.
[562] Gīsūdarāz, *Asmār al-Asrār*, pp. 38–39.
[563] *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 366, pp. 280–81.

above cited poem by Ghazzālī compares the ensemble of the enchanted mystics with intoxicated nightingales in the garden of love and gnosis. The garden of the poem—a metaphor for the garden of mirrors and the heaven that is found in the heart of the ecstatic lover—is where these lovers see and recognize each another in the illuminations of the unseen. This image is complemented with the poem's meter pattern of *ramal muthamman makhbūn* whose energetic tenor is readily adaptable to the beat of dance music in *samāʿ*. This poem and the other stanzas that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt employes in this section of the *Tamhīdāt* are the center of action that highlight the significance of *samāʿ* for these mystics. Another important verse is the one that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt says his Shaykh Mawdūd was in the habit of repeating. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt lists this verse immediately after the poem by Ghazzālī.[564]

> Our Shaykh Mawdūd repeated this verse often:
>
> If the ascetic reaches the beauty of that visage
> We can reach the district [of the beloved] with just one cry of *hūy*

He identifies Mawdūd as his Shaykh but does not specify if he heard Mawdūd directly, heard about his ways from others, or met him in his visions and dreams. Regardless, he makes it clear that he is intimately familiar with his Shaykh's habit of repeating this very verse.

This instance is the only time that the name Mawdūd is mentioned in all but one of the manuscript copies of the *Tamhīdāt*. Mawdūd's name is brought up a second time in the Paris manuscript copy of the *Tamhīdāt*.[565] The phrase, "our Shaykh Mawdūd" identifies him as the subject of passage number sixty–seven on heresy, the black light of Satan, and meditation through prayer.[566] This passage immediately follows a verse that depicts God dancing as in *samāʿ*, raising His hands in a gesture that the lover interprets to be a calling on him. God is heard saying that He is not inviting the lover; it is His way to move about in this manner.[567] ʿAyn al-Quḍāt coordinates the memory of Mawdūd sequentially with the image of God in the kind of jubilation that the wayfarer experiences in *samāʿ*. He depicts the Mawdūd of the

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[564] Ibid., sec. 367, p. 282.

[565] Ibid, p. 48n10. ʿUṣayrān observes this note in his manuscript edition. His observation is noted by Aḥmad Mujāḥid. See, Mujāḥid, *Majmūʿi-yi Āthār Fārsī Aḥmad Ghazzālī*, p. 269.

[566] *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 67, pp. 48–49.

[567] Ibid., sec. 66, p. 48.

Paris manuscript, preparing for *ṣalāt* (the Muslim ritual prayer). As Mawdūd is meditating on his intention for the prayer and the orientation that his heart in going to follow in approaching God, he announces that he is an infidel. Wearing the garb of the infidel (*zunnār*), he decides to follow the route that will take him closer to God through infidelity. Similar to ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and Aḥmad Ghazzālī, he is ready to dive into himself and sink into the black light of Satan. After Mawdūd comes out of *ṣalāt*, he proves himself blasphemous by comparing himself with the Prophet.[568]

> O Muḥammad! You have not yet reached the middle of [the path of] reverence and have not yet been allowed into the dark veil whose keeper said: "Then by thy power, I will put them all in the wrong."[569] Wait until they let you there:
>
> Without sight one cannot travel the path of wandering (*qalandarī*)
> Furtively one cannot go to the district of adversity
> Infidelity in itself is the basis of faith
> Leisurely one cannot go to infidelity

Aḥmad Mujāhid, a Ghazzālī scholar, argues that the mysterious Shaykh of this passage is Aḥmad Ghazzālī and not Mawdūd.[570] It seems unlikely that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt is referring to Aḥmad Ghazzālī for he does not describe him in this fashion at any other place in his writing. Moreover, the similarity between the verse that is cited in the present context and the one that Mawdūd likes to repeat can be an indication that both passages are referring to the same person. The key word in these poems is the "district" (*kūy*) that the wayfarer wants to reach. Both passages, sixty–seven and two-hunred–eighty–two, are about the way to God through the domain of Satan. Mawdūd's favorite poem compares the strivings of the ascetics with the vocative utterance *hūy*, which is orthographically identical with the term *"hawā,"* meaning fancy and passion. These terms bring the picture full-circle to the point of departure toward God via the passions that are induced

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[568] Ibid., sec. 67, pp. 48–49.

[569] *Qurʾān*, 38: 82.

[570] Ghazzālī, *Majmūʿih-yi Āthār*. According to Aḥmad Mujāḥid, this quotation was recorded among the ecstatic sayings of Aḥmad Ghazzālī and was thus attributed to him. He concludes that the mysterious shaykh of this passage was assumed to be Ghazzālī.

by Satan.[571] In the other poem, the wayfarer admits that infidelity is the foundation of belief. If the Shaykh that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt is referring to is Quṭb al-Dīn Mawdūd, then poetry and *samāʿ* provide an appropriate occasion for recalling the memory of this Chishtī leader.

In conclusion, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and the mystics of his milieu practiced *samāʿ* with the understanding that the encounter with Satan was an important stage in reaching true faith in God. *Samāʿ* was an opportunity to meet and greet Satan, the companion who could tempt mystics astray. He could also challenge them into asserting their stance beyond the chatter of ego toward an internal quiescence where God could be found in the echo of the covenance that pulsates through the soul. Satan was an indispensable adversary who could be employed in navigating the way to God for he knew the way and was intent on barring the seeker passage onto the canopies of the beloved. Those who understood this principle and set out searching for Satan in the hidden corners and the expansive valleys of their soul were regarded by Satan as worthy antagonists. Aḥmad Ghazzālī boasted about being such a person: a claim for which some scholars of Islam criticized him and accused him of infidelity. Sibṭ ibn ʿAbdallāh al-Jawzī (A.D. d. 1256) and Sharaf al-Dīn Abū Barakāt ibn al-Mustawfī al-Irbilī (A.D. 1170–1239) reported that Ghazzālī claimed that during his stay in Hamadhān Satan appeared to him and prostrated before him at the hospice where he was residing. This certainly refers to the prophetic saying, "my Satan has submitted" (*aslama shayṭānī*). When Ghazzālī was asked how that could be possible when Satan refused the command of God to prostrate before Adam, he reiterated that Satan repeated the action more than seventy times. Ibn al-Jawzī and al-Mustawfī questioned his faith in God and said that he fabricated this story in order to promote himself.[572] The meeting with Satan—fictitious or actual—illustrates that Ghazzālī's courageous faith in God compelled Satan to acknowledge this descendent of Adam worthy of his respect. There was a lesson for Satan to learn; through their interactions, Satan approached the moment of creation with the understanding that humankind is the created image of God. This incident provides an example for the kind of wayfaring that the seeker could venture as he navigated the atmosphere of *samāʿ* where Satan was lurking to lure

[571] Mawdūd Chishtī was a celebrity in the Deccan and an inspiration to the later Chishtī religious leaders. This notwithstanding, the emphasis on Satan and infidelity is not present in the work of the later Chishtīs.

[572] Ghazzālī, *Majmūʿih-yi Āthār*, pp. 86–87.

and mislead his prey. *Samāʿ* was a venture that took the wayfarer on the turbulent waters of his/her soul to a state of internal quiescence. Ghazzālī even gave preference to *samāʿ* over acts of worship.

> So the inner nature (*sirr*) of audition in its various ranks (*marātib*) comprises the verities of the five pillars; for prayer, pilgrimage, and the two testimonies pertain to external ranks, and fasting and almsgiving to internal ranks; and sometimes a man gets from audition perfections such as are not obtained from persistence in many acts of devotion.[573]

The Chishtīs were in accord with Ghazzālī on the subject of *samāʿ*. Khawāja Gīsūdarāz approved of Ghazzālī and his contemporary Chishtī mystic Quṭb al-Dīn Mawdūd who considered *samāʿ* to be superior to prayer.

> It must be noted though, that Gīsūdirāz was very particular about prayers and *sharīʿah* in general, but he does not seem to have been a man who would take any criticism against samāʿ, in which respect he is comparable to Aḥmad al-Ghazālī as seen through *Bawāriq al-Ilmāʿ*. In the following quotation of Shaykh Mawdūd Chishtī (d. 527/1132), cited approvingly by Gīsūdirāz, a clear implication of preference to samāʿ over prayers is discerned. When asked whether samāʿ was better than prayers, Shaykh Mawdūd Chishtī replied, " a person prays with all its formalities, but still he is not certain whether his prayers will be accepted, for God might hear them or reject them. For us, samāʿ is one of the "attractions" (*jadhbah*) of the Merciful (*al-raḥmān*). Prayer is doubtful in its being heard (*qubūh*), whereas samāʿ is "acceptance itself" (*ʿayn-i qubūl*).[574]

This perspective on prayer and *samāʿ* sheds light on ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's description of Mawdūd in the *Tamhīdāt* where he depicts him in the attire of the infidel, preparing for prayer and the meeting with Satan. His motive is to surrender his tainted humanity in total confidence to an affable God who is there, in the ravishing tunes that invoke memories of the homeland and arise in man the longing for the divine.

Mawdūd Chishtī had a considerable celebrity in the Deccan and was the subject of a number of miniature paintings. The emphasis on the domain of Satan, however, was not an issue in the work of the later generations of the Chishtīs. In the India of Gīsūdarāz, the controversy over *samāʿ* was formulated in terms of the divisive impact of *samāʿ* on the integrity of the already small Muslim population of India.[575]

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[573] Hussaini, *Sayyid Muḥammad Al-Ḥusaynī-i Gīsūdirāz*, p. 103.
[574] Ibid., p. 127.
[575] Ibid., p. 123.

> The conflict between the ʿ*Ulamā*ʾ and the sufis during the Delhi Sultanate (602/1206-962/1555) was mainly focused on the question of samāʿ. The Indian ʿ*Ulamā*ʾ, instead of condemning the institution through treatises and books as was the case in the classical period, tried to put an end to samāʿ gatherings by calling meetings (*maḥḍar*) before the Sultans. They endeavoured to make the Sultans issue official interdicts against the organizations of samāʿ, but they were never successful.

The objection was that audition of music was a discord to the "harmonious relationship between the Sufis and 'ordinary believers.'"[576] Such criticisms did not dissuade the Chishtīs from engaging in *samāʿ* and institutionalizing it as a major tenet of their order. Gīsūdarāz and Masʿūd Bakk were important authorities in this debate. Like their predecessors, they utilized the teachings of Aḥmad Ghazzālī and ʿAyn al-Quḍāt in their writing and developed important discussions in advancing the discourse on *samāʿ*. Gīsūdarāz remained committed to *samāʿ* in spite of the threats that were directed against him. His activities provoked Sultan Fīrūzshāh Bahmanī who was informed by members of the ʿ*ulamā*ʾ that in *samāʿ* gatherings some people prostrated before Gīsūdarāz. The king "... sent word to the Chishtī sufi to hear *samāʿ* in seclusion (*khalwat*). *Siyar-i Muḥammadī* relates that after that Gīsūdarāz listened to *samāʿ* from inside a room with a curtain separating him from the rest of the listeners."[577] This warning demonstrates that the Sultan was politically threatened by the authority and popularity of Gīsūdarāz. He was not only a charismatic religious leader but also an openminded thinker who considered *samāʿ* permissible for all members of the community irrespective of their religion and creed. This is how he used *samāʿ* as an occasion to foster solidarity among the community members at large, even as the king interpreted it a "threat" to his own popularity and the integrity of the Muslim community.[578]

The early Chishtī scholars joined Aḥmad Ghazzālī and ʿAyn al-Quḍāt to the degree that often mention of one was followed by recalling the other. For the most part, they considered ʿAyn al-Quḍāt important because he was the distinguished disciple of Aḥmad

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[576] Carl Ernst and Bruce Lawrence, *Sufi Martyrs of Love: The Chishti Order in South Asia and Beyond* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 34.

[577] Hussaini, *Sayyid Muḥammad Al-Ḥusaynī-i Gīsūdirāz*, p. 125.

[578] This attitude is current in Gulbarga where people from different walks of life are welcome at the *dargāh*. Frequent *samāʿ* and *ghawwālī* proceedings, especially during the ʿ*urs* anniversary, are equally attractive for the Muslim and the non-Muslim pilgrims from different parts of India.

Ghazzālī. Gīsūdarāz, however, approached ʿAyn al-Quḍāt independently and composed the commentary with exclusive focus on him and the *Tamhīdāt*. Gīsūdarāz honored ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's interpretation of *samāʿ*, the unseen, and his epistemology of lights. He felt such close affinity with ʿAyn al-Quḍāt that he said he was in contact with the spirit (*rūḥ*) of this mystic who preceded him by two centuries. Gīsūdarāz reported meeting the spirit of other great men, the Prophet Muḥammad, Murtaḍā ʿAlī, Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī, al-Junayd al-Baghdādī (d. A.D. 909), and Aḥmad Ghazzālī.[579] His visionary unveilings reiterate that Gīsūdarāz held ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and his teacher among the most distinguished men of God and among the teachers to whom the Chishtī order aspired.

[579] Hussaini, *Sayyid Muḥammad Al-Ḥusaynī-i Gīsūdirāz*, p. 14.

# CONCLUSION

The concluding pages of the *Tamhīdāt* praise Avicenna as a visionary philosopher. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt considered Avicenna superior to his contemporary mystic Abū Saʿīd Faḍlallāh ibn Abū al-Khayr (A.D. 967–1049).[580] The two were in contact with each other[581] and their correspondence was the occasion for Avicenna to compose *Risālat ila Abī Saʿīd ibn Abī al-Khayr fī al-Zuhd* (The Treatise to Abī Saʿīd ibn Abī al-Khayr on Asceticism). ʿAyn al-Quḍāt states his preference for the Muslim Parepetatic philosopher as follows:[582]

> But friend, did you not read in the *Aḍḥawiya* treatise that Abū Saʿīd Abū al-Khayr—God's blessing be upon him—wrote to Avicenna saying: "Guide me by proof." Avicenna, the master, responded to him by way of the treatise, saying: "Entry into veritable unbelief and departure from notional Islam, and that you attend only to what is beyond the three figures [sic] so that you are Muslim and infidel. If you are beyond this, you are neither a believer nor an infidel. If you are below this, you are a Muslim and a polytheist. If you are ignorant of this, you should know that you have no value, and do not deem yourself among the totality of existing things." Shaykh Abū Saʿīd in the *Maṣābīḥ* [sic] says: "These words caused me to attain what a lifetime of a hundred thousand years of worship would not."

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[580] Muḥammad ibn Munawwar Abī Saʿīd Mayhanī, *Asrār al-Tawḥīd fī Maqāmāt al-Shaykh Abī Saʿīd*, 5th. ed. Vol 1, edited by Muḥammad Riḍā Shafiʿī Kadkanī (Tehran: Intishārāt Āgāh, 2003), p. 47. The correspondence with Abū Saʿīd was the occasion for Avicenna to compose *Risālat ila Abī Saʿīd ibn Abī al-Khayr fī al-Zuhd* (The Treatise to Abī Saʿīd ibn Abī al-Khayr on Asceticism).

[581] Moḥammad Ebn-e Monavvar, *The Secrets of God's Mystical Oneness or the Spiritual Stations of Shaikh Abu Saʿid [Asrār al-Towḥid fi Maqāmāt al-Šeyk Abi Saʿid]*, translated by John O'Kane (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 1992), pp. 300–302. Ibn Munawwar explains that these two masters were in correspondence with each other and had the occasion to meet in person in Abū Saʿīd's town, Meyhana of Khurāsān. Upon their meeting at the hospice of the Shaykh, they withdrew from others and held private council for three days and nights. Avicenna departed afterward. When each was asked by his students separately about his impression of the other Avicenna replied "Everything I know, he sees!" and Abū Saʿīd said "Everything I see, he knows!" In this manner, they emphasized their access to the body of knowledge that one articulates through knowledge and the other perceives by means of visionary enlightenment.

[582] *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 463, p. 349.

The *Tamhīdāt* is clear about ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's views on Avicenna, but ambiguous about the source and the context for Avicenna's comment. Some scholars have argued that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt was mistaken about the authenticity of this exchange between Avicenna and Abū Saʿīd because this passage is not found in any of the surviving manuscript copies of Avicenna's *Risālat al- Aḍḥawiya*, which the *Tamhīdāt* identifies as the source. Shafiʿī Kadkanī, the renowned scholar of Islamic mysticism, initially supported the view that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt was mistaken about the identity of Avicenna's addressee and mistook Abū Saʿīd Abū al-Khayr for Abū Saʿd al-Hamadhānī.[583] Shafiʿī Kadkanī revisited this statement on the basis of new textual evidence that he and some of his colleagues discovered a few years later. He explained that the exchange attributed to Avicenna and Abū Saʿīd was found verbatim in correspondence between them, which was cited in the Massignon copy of *Zubdat al-Ḥaqāʾīq*. In the beginning of the passage ʿAyn al-Quḍāt wrote "It is a memento from our Shaykh Aḥmad—may God sanctify his *sīrr*." This is how ʿAyn al-Quḍāt identified Aḥmad Ghazzālī as the one who brought this passage to his attention.[584] This new evidence led Shafiʿī Kadkanī to conclude that ʿUṣayrān's edition of the *Tamhīdāt* misread the word *ukhrā* (another) for *aḍḥawiya*.[585] It must be noted that ʿUṣayrān includes the sentence on Ghazzālī in his edition but places it at the end of the preceding paragraph following a couplet on infidelity on the path of love. Therefore, ʿUṣayrān's reading associates Aḥmad Ghazzālī with the couplet and not the exchange between Avicenna and Abū Saʿīd. Reading this passage becomes more complicated as it attributes a text called *Maṣābīḥ* (Luminaries) to Abū Saʿīd, possibly by error since there are no records to indicate that he authored this treatise. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's reference to Avicenna and Abū Saʿīd is important in illustrating that he was referring to an actual document that was available in his time and known by him and Ghazzālī. Moreover, the attention that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt was paying to this topic by placing it in the conclusion of his most important work,

[583] Muḥammad Riḍā Shafiʿī Kadkanī, "Dar bārih-ye Abū Saʿīd Abū al-Khayr," *Sukhan* 19. 7 (1969): 694, 697–98. The author argues that ʿAyn al-Quḍāt was mistaken about the identity of Avicenna's interlocutor who is probably Abū Saʿd al-Hamdhānī. Moreover, Avicenna did not write the *Aḍḥawiya* treatise as a response to the question that Abū Saʿīd Faḍlallāh posed to him. The treatise was written for Al-Shaykh al-Amīn Abī Bakr Muḥammad ibn ʿAbīd.

[584] Abī Saʿīd Mayhanī, *Asrār al-Tawḥīd*, vol. 1, pp. 51–52.

[585] Ibid., p. 52.

underscores the importance of Avicenna for him. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt evaluated the relationship between Avicenna and Abū Saʿīd to be one in which the mystic was seeking guidance (*arshadanī*) from the philosopher. This emphasizes the regard that he had for the visionary philosophers who stood in immediate vicinity to the stage of knowledge by proximity (*al-ʿilm al-ladunnī*). The philosopher had an advantage over the mystic because of his ability to contemplate and discuss supra-rational realities by means of discursive reasoning, which in the final analysis argued for the limitation of reason.

Muḥammad Quṭb al-Dīn Ishkiwarī (d. A.D. 1088/95) the author of *Maḥbūb al-Qulūb* (The Beloved of the Hearts) approached the exchange between Avicenna and Abū Saʿīd in the context of the Qurʾānic allusions. Ishkiwarī argued that "veritable unbelief" finds its genesis in the verse "Whoever rejects Evil and believes in Allah," that vouches for renouncing anything that is other than God.[586] He explained that Avicenna's words "anything except God" mean the corporeal world of transition and chance possibilities. "Notional Islam" is nominal assent to faith as is verified in the verse "We believe."[587] And the "three figures" are the people of paradise, the people of hell, and the people of *aʿrāf* (a place between paradise and hell which resonates with the purgatory of the Christian faith). One who pays heed to these divisions is a believer in God and a non-believer in anything other than Him. One who goes beyond the three figures but stops at that point in his quest, is neither a Muslim nor an unbeliever because these definitions do not apply to him. But, if he is below the three, he is a polytheist on the grounds that he is submissive and obedient in his belief but turns to other than God in finding his faith. Anyone who is ignorant of these divisions is not worthy of mention and consideration.[588] A different analysis is provided in a marginal note which appears in one of the copies of the Avicenna/Abū Saʿīd correspondence manuscripts. The anonymous commentator explains that Avicenna's "three figures" stand for the stages of belief and heresy that the wayfarer goes through: (1) Muslim and infidel (2)

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[586] *Qurʾān*, 2: 256. "Whoever rejects Evil and believes in Allah hath grasped the most trustworthy Handhold, that never breaks."

[587] Ibid., 49: 14. "We believe." Say, "Ye have no faith: but ye (only) say, 'We have submitted our wills to Allah,' for not yet has Faith entered your hearts."

[588] Quṭb al-Dīn Ishkiwarī, *Avicenna bi Rawāyat-i Ishkiwarī and Ardkānī*, translated by Aḥmad Ḥusaynī Ardkānī (Tehrān: Intishārāt Amīr Kabīr, 1985), pp. 59–60.

neither a believer nor an infidel, and (3) Muslim and polytheist. He explains, to be simultaneously a Muslim and a polytheist marks the state of consciousness that is known as the Doomsday and *al-ṭāmma al-kubrā* (the Great Event) that is mentioned in the *Qurʾān*. The seeker is not going to have any other Doomsday past this stage.[589] More specifically, the author is describing a stage when the wayfarer experiences his consciousness as the convergence of the absolute acceptance of the word of God (*iṭlāq*) and its repudiation (*tafṣīl*).[590] These brief remarks by the commentator lead the reader to conclude that the Doomsday of the wayfarer is the uprooting of his understanding where the affirmation and the renunciation of belief—namely being a Muslim and a heretic simultaneously—are not juxtaposed against each another but are perceived as a confluence, which the wayfarer joins.[591] Avicenna's discussion points to the transient quality of faith and challenges the view that sees faith as a self-contained concept. It argues for the existence of a paradoxical state of consciousness where faith and its antithesis do not collide but merge. In this state, the unity of God is experienced in His manifestation in all of the existence such that the wayfarer can be deluded into misinterpreting His unity as polytheism. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt is in accord with Avicenna that the wayfarer goes through a process of unlearning the concepts that he has held to be true and perceiving the unity of God as an undifferentiated manifestation that is not held in sway by either faith or disbelief. In a discussion whose aim is to enlighten the wayfarer on the path to God, both the *sharīʿa* and the path are abandoned for the murky prospects of a truth so incomprehensible that it can cause the wayfarer to become insane.[592]

> On the path of love, unbelief and heresy (*tarsāʾī)* are better
> In the vicinity of your tavern, infamy is better;
> Wearing the *zunnār* instead of the habit of unity, is better
> Insanity, insanity, insanity, is better.

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[589] Abī Saʿd Mayhanī, *Asrār al-Tawḥīd*, p. 51.

[590] Ibid., pp. 50–51.

[591] Carl Ernst, *Words of Ecstasy in Sufism*, p. 82. Ernst compares this letter with a similar letter by Ḥallāj on the subject of infidelity. He points out that Avicenna is referring to "transcendence of the three 'individualities (*shukhus*),' probably meaning the three 'persons' of grammar, and hence, all multiplicity; acceptance of these distinctions is equivalent to dualistic idolatry."

[592] *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 463, p. 350.

Avicenna is remarkable because he is able to perceive this insanity and yet use rational discourse to describe it to others. In several places in his writing, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt reiterates that the wayfarer's experience of God is too complex to be rendered as pantheism or polytheism. He explains, just as we know that God is with us in all manifestations of existence, we remain unaware of the quality of His proximity to us. In other words, our restricted and restrictive human understanding prevents us from comprehending the consciousness of God. Therefore, when we experience God in dimensions where reality is too paradoxical to be comprehensible, we are tempted to misconstrue our witnessing in the familiar pantheistic or polytheistic terms. This is the case with faith and heresy as they are discussed beyond the dictums of religion. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt emphasizes that religion is meant to respond to the human condition, which is dominated by the body and the corporeal mode of existence. A person who sheds the body, in death or in special realms of consciousness, perceives the irrelevance of religious dictates to his altered state of consciousness. At this juncture, he is directed by his heart and his soul in perceiving the meaning of the Doomsday and the apocalypse: "the day when earth is transformed into something other than itself and so is the firmaments."[593] The hour is reached beyond the three figures of Avicenna which stand for the spectrum from the believer to the polytheists who include the Greek philosophers, the Indian sects, and the atheists. When one's consciousness is linked to the consciousness of God, he perceives faith and infidelity to be the manifestations of the same reality.

Gīsūdarāz Chīshtī provides valuable insight on this discussion in his commentary of the *Tamhīdāt*. He explains that the exchange between Avicenna and Abū Saʿīd indicates that entry into veritable unbelief has two meanings. It means that the seeker reaches the truth and has an interpretation of it. However, his understanding of the truth is heretical, and incompatible with the *sharīʿa*. The other meaning is that the seeker enters a truth, which is void of division, multiplicity, definition, and allusion. He perceives this truth as his consciousness joins it. But as he becomes conscious of it and tries to define it, he finds himself articulating heresy. In other words, the union is overshadowed with duality. In this manner, Avicenna describes veritable unbelief as an activity of perceiving the truth, which is equivalent to the seeker's

[593] *Qurʾān*, 14: 48.

experience of his self-identity. Gīsūdarāz identifies the three figures to be the angelic realm (*malakūt*), the highest heaven (*jabrūt*), and the divine realm (*lāhūt*). He adds that some mystics like Ibn ʿArabī could only advance this far into the unseen. In contrast, Avicenna identifies realms beyond these three, which are unimaginably abstract and remote from conceptualization. A mystic who is below the three figures is a Muslim in having his heart set on God and in not engaging in idolatry, and a polytheist on the grounds that his attention is set on himself and his self-identification through the actions (*afʿāl*), motions (*ḥarakāt*), and rests (*sakanāt*), that he experiences in accosting God. The mystic who reaches the realms past the three figures, is dissociated from notional Islam and the superficial norms of religiosity. Such a person is both a Muslim and a non-believer on the grounds that he has arrived at such depths in the unseen but is still far from the truth of the truth. In this context, unbelief is a beacon on the path that directs the wayfarer toward the next destinations. This is how unbelief finds its genesis in the truth. When Abū Saʿīd pays homage to Avicenna on account of his insights, he is either referring to witnessing an existence whose being overtakes the wayfarer and the act of witnessing, or he is speaking about a mode of perception that the mystic identifies with. Drawing attention to these two possibilities, Gisūdīrās makes a distinction between the visionary and the contemplative modes of perceiving unbelief and the truth.

These truths are reached through death. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's approach to death is such that he considers both living and thinking to be constituents of death. He argues that life and death are not separable by the ceasing of one's heart beat. Death is an elevated state of consciousness that can be experienced by the mystic at the same time as he is anchored in a living body. In his writing, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt describes an exalted out-of-body experience, which he refers to as mystical death. While in this state, the wayfarer is not unalive: he is in a state incorporating both life and death and yet undefinable by conventional understanding of the two. Mystical death is the stage of experience that reveals the transparency of perception on the Doomsday. This coming in contact with death is a response to time. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, similar to his mentor Aḥmad Ghazzālī, contemplates time as a grappling between the time of the lover (time temporal) and that of the beloved (durationless time). ʿAyn al-Quḍāt describes his understanding of time as the event of the Doomsday and as the

perception of the lights that the wayfarer experiences.[594] Through death, the wayfarer penetrates into the unseen seeking union with the beloved. There he sees the secrets of the Doomsday because he has passed through the veils that conceal the "hour." For ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, the Doomsday of the wayfarer is the day that he has risen against himself and embraced the end of time. That is the day when the secrets of his heart are laid open and he perceives them through his transcended consciousness.[595] Mystical death creates a rupture in the consciousness that relativizes life and death as well as ones identity. This detached consciousness has progressed beyond thinking, through death, through—even—the apocalypse. Mystical death is a state of mind, a mode of beyond-thought that perturbs any pre-conceived notion of cognition and self-identity. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt conveys this consciousness in terms of the lights that he has observed in the unseen. In the *Tamhīdāt*, after describing human beings and the creation through an epistemology of lights, he explains:[596]

> But, O friend, know that if they want to allow a man into himself and enlighten him into his own self, he will gain sight: "And if you obey him you will be on the right path."[597] It is thus that the illumination of the Light of God gives man eyes, and ears, and tongue. "By him was I

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[594] *Zubdat al-Ḥaqāʾiq*, p. 95. Consider for instance the passage below in *Zubdat al-Ḥaqāʾiq*, from the section entitled *The Nature of Doomsday Is Hidden in Relation to Human Knowledge*.

> Know that the Hour is inside the veils of the heavens and the earth, and it bears the same relation in regard to these veils as the fetus bears to the womb of his mother. For this reason, the Hour will occur only when "the earth has shaken to its extreme," [*Qurʾān*, 99:1] and the sky has opened asunder and the stars have been effaced, and the sun has fallen, and the mountains have moved and the loaded she camels left unattended, [*Qurʾān*, 81: 1–4] and the contents of graves have scattered, and the contents of the hearts made manifest [*Qurʾān*, 100: 9–10]. To sum up, "the day when earth is transformed into something other than itself and so is the firmaments" [*Qurʾān*, 14: 48]. So, as long as the wayfarer is outside the veils of the earth and the heavens, the Hour does not happen to him. For, the Hour is only inside the veils because God is inside the veils and to Him belongs the knowledge of Hour. As he—God's blessing and peace be upon him—says: "The Hour will not occur while on the face of earth there is anyone who says `there is no God but God." This means: as long as a man remains outside the veils, the Hour is hidden from his knowledge; but as soon as he passes these veils on his path and becomes grounded in enjoying the presence of Ideas, the secret of the Hour becomes disclosed to him.

[595] *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 427, pp. 325–26.
[596] Ibid., sec. 354, pp. 270–71.
[597] *Qurʾān*, 24: 54.

> hearing, and seeing and speaking and by me he hears and by me he sees and by me he speaks," are descriptions of the attributes that adorn the wayfarer. At this stage he has gone past the earth and the heavens and slough off his self and his humanity and has seen "yet, when we want, we can change, entirely, the like of them."[598] He has arrived at "the day when earth is transformed."[599] He has inhaled the scent of "who has known his self," and tasted the wine of "has known his lord." "Indeed, God created Adam after the visage of mercy" has appeared to him. "The merciful is established on the throne,"[600] is disclosed to him. "Governing the affairs from the heavens to the earth"[601] is actualized to him. "God all mighty is descending," has become manifested to him. With zeal, he has set on in the world of "the enactment of their temperament is through the qualities of God." He has attained "they became recipients of divine attributes." And "the believer is a mirror for another believer" has brothered him.

As this passage indicates, insight through death results from a direct and individual experience; it involves desiring and willing death on the part of the wayfarer and being taken in on the other side. This relies on the will to step into another reality—death—whose preliminary move is to part with one's self and to examine the self. This experience incorporates the cognizance of the self-identity in relation to the unseen (*ghayb*) as well as the relation between the body and the soul as the individual wayfarer experiences it. The narrator in the *Tamhīdāt* recalls and records life in terms of death, and death in terms of life. The writing in the *Tamhīdāt* is thus the juncture of eternity and also the presence expressed most vividly in the technical language of lights.[602]

ʿAyn al-Quḍāt has observed the lights in the realm of death that have derived from within his own heart. His perception of these lights pivots on the relation between external light and the non-compared light of God in his station in the quest: his degree of self-knowledge of

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[598] Ibid., 76: 28.
[599] Ibid., 14: 48.
[600] Ibid., 20: 5.
[601] Ibid., 10: 3.
[602] Muḥammad S. Shahrazūrī, *Sharḥ-i Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq*, edited by Hossein Ziai (Tehran: Pajhuheshgah, 1993). The meta-language of such discourse is developed by Suhrawardī later in the same century. Shihāb al-Dīn Yaḥyā ibn Ḥabash ibn Amīrak ʿAbūl-Futūḥ Suhrawardī—known as the Shaykh al-Ishrāq (Master of Illumination) was born in Iran in the year 549/1154. He was ordered to death by Saladīn's son, al-Malik al-Ẓahir at Aleppo in 587/1191. He is the author of *Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq* (Philosophy of Illumination).

the continuum of lights, and his understanding of God. The encounter with the self and the unknown is as personal and unique as a person's death can be. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt states the varied complexities of this individuality through his teaching that each mystic's path is distinct from others to the extent that insanity and blasphemy in some can be taken as the true measure of faith.[603] This death, daring, and love is an act of faith beyond reason. When the wayfarer arrives at the threshold of death he must part with his body and willfully enter the unknown. The initiation into death requires the exercise of the mystic's individual and personal ability to overcome his attachment to the body and its security: the security of form as a familiar container—a frame and a shield, outlining one's dimensions in time and in space. This existence means separating one from the others: in this case, death. Leaving the body behind characterizes the stage when the wayfarer overcomes being anchored in the body. Rending the soul free from the body involves suspense as the soul is outside the body while hovering in close proximity to it. This suspense occurs in the moments after the soul has left the body but can still think in corporeal terms, in relation with the body. Fear (*khawf*) is an anticipated reaction in this state. The apprehension of the unknown and the fear of not returning back into the body and dying an untimely death permeate this threshold.

The wayfarer grapples with death and annihilation (*fanāʾ*) at different stages in the journey as he roams the unseen and participates in its mysteries by interacting with the lights of Muḥammad and Satan. These lights represent the created world as emanations of God.[604]

> The conclusion of what is being said is that God is the essence and light the contingency; and essence never is nor shall be without accident. Therefore, I have called the firmament and the earth by these names metaphorically, since they are His two lights. Because the principle of the sky and the earth, and their reality, is these two lights: the light of

[603] *Tamhīdāt*, sec. 301, pp. 231–32.

> Alas! Those scorched by love are mad, and madness is related to insanity, and insanity leads to infidelity. Wait until you see our beloved; then you will know why one could become insane. Have you ever seen anyone become insane because of an idol? Listen to these verses:
> By religious law infidelity was revealed
> Because love's madness became insanity
> Whoever gained sight through love's blasphemy
> Came from the grasp of the beautiful unique idol

[604] Ibid., sec. 340, p. 258.

> Muḥammad and that of Satan. A description of the sky and the earth has already been given; look them up in the appropriate places. So what and which is this light that is the creation of the essence of divinity? God willing, it will be told symbolically, point by point.

In this context, what is called Satan presents itself as a light and as one of God's attributes. He is the lover who is separated from the beloved and is deprived from seeing Him. In ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's interpretation of the Doomsday, heaven and hell are described in their relationship with one's ability to see the beloved.[605]

> So, it becomes clear what is heaven and what is hell. That elder thus said: "Love is the path and the sight of the beloved is heaven but separation is fire and torment." He said that the love of God is the religion of the lover, and seeing the beloved his heaven, being far from Him is his inferno. This, also, is entirely within the self.

Here ʿAyn al-Quḍāt describes a kind of seeing that defines the Doomsday of perception. Hell is where one cannot see the beloved, and heaven is being in his presence. In this manner, ʿAyn al-Quḍāt contemplates the process of separation and union, the move in the direction of truth, and the reality of unity in terms of death and the language of lights.[606] He explains, one's identity (*anāʾiyatuhu*) issues from his separations from his self at different stages of the death journey. One's identity, death and visions of the beloved, involve many levels of discovery or "unveiling." He explains that the wayfarer can see the unseen not with the eyes of reason but, similar to the Prophet Muḥammad, with his inner sight (*ʿayn al-baṣīra*). This kind of seeing is an act of faith and an essential step on the path toward God. Sight is associated with the vision of God almighty and the apocalyptic vision of His wrath and mercy on the day of judgement. The act of seeing, the seen, the sight of the Judgement Day, revelation, and the person of the wayfarer are all brought together in a place of no place: the heart of the wayfarer. There, both time and space cease being and the truth is manifest in eternity.

For ʿAyn al-Quḍāt, the secrets of the Doomsday become visible to whomever traverses the distance between life and death, goes beyond the confines of understanding toward the unseen and the unknown, and ultimately, finds repose in His presence. The truth is encountered

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[605] Ibid., sec. 384, p. 292.

[606] *Zubdat al-Ḥaqāʾiq*, pp. 91–92:

in degrees in a special state of consciousness that is inconceivable unless it is personally lived. The truth is where light ceases being a modality in observation. The truth is perceived beyond Muḥammad and Satan who represent the attributes of God: the truth is past good and evil in the direction of His essence. This realization brings ʿAyn al-Quḍāt closer to his understanding of his own humanity and his understanding of man through death. It did not, unfortunately, bring understanding to the men who sat in judgement of him in 1131.

# APPENDIX

## *Letter 98*

ʿAyn al-Quḍāt addressed the following letter to an unidentified person who criticized him for appealing to his captors for release from the prison in Baghdad.[607]

550 – I read the consolation that came from the great and endeared brother, may God prolong his longevity and make his end more blessed than his worldly life. My soul received abundant peace and comfort from it. I welcomed those elegant words and subtle meanings wholeheartedly and these verses came to my mind:

> Your letter arrived, it is colorful
> It made me vivacious with joy.
>
> The gardens, when they saw your letter, withered with envy
> The pearl dissolved abashed by its eloquence
>
> I filled my ears with passages from it
> Until I covered its lines with kisses

551 – I did not want to leave a few points unattended, may God out of His graciousness keep us against errors. First: you were astonished by the description of the longing for the homeland; had you studied these chapters in their entirety you would not have found room for this objection. In a similar vein, Balāl al-Ḥabashī, may God be pleased with him, and the Prophet, praise be upon him, yearned for the mountains and the streams of Mecca. This is what we understand from the apparent qualities. In addition, your objection that in my diction, I was verbose and rhetorical rather than unrestricted, is exactly true; your words speak my heart. Indeed, the best poetry is the most untrue and the verbose is the twin of the poets.[608] That is why I renounced

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[607] "Letter 98," in *Maktūbāt*, 2: 355–63.

[608] Arabic uses the word *shuʿarā* rather than *al-shāʾarīn* as the plural for *shāʿir*. The choice of this form here can indicate a mistake on the part of the scribe whose native language is, ultimately, Persian. Or it can be a pun indicating "those who feel," which is the exact meaning of the word *al-shāʿarīn*.

both of them and admitted that the perfection of both of these crafts is that which is adorned with deceit. When the wayfarer understands the harm in lying, he will cease doing it. That is all!

552 – Your letter had also said that patience is the behest of the noble. This is true; however, cultivating and acquiring knowledge is a different matter. Just as being described by distinguished attributes and being dissociated from abject qualities, is a different world all to itself. My aim is to acquire knowledge of asceticism, patience, unity, trust, content, surrender, resignation, and affection. But, I am indeed far from the reality of these attributes.

> Blind-folded I can read the writings of this group
> I want to reach and greet them, but I cannot
> I love the righteous but I am not among them
> Would that God grant us righteousness

553 – However since I am not one of them, I follow after them.

> If I cannot buy a jar of sugar
> At least I turn the flies away from the jar

Indeed, the people of the truth have said:

> Even if you weigh two thousand measures of wine
> Unless you drink of it, you cannot be intoxicated

As for the saying, one who loves a people is one of them, that also is marvelous. When the beloved is out of reach, the lover has no choice but to be acquainted with her domain.

> Those who stand guard and protect your district and dwelling
> Are indeed sovereign over me, since they carry your scent

554 – O you brave young man! It is deception, when I am not patient but claim patience. If I have claimed knowledge, I have done so by way of my humanity not by way of chivalrous men. If I have claimed [knowledge] in *Zubdat al-Ḥaqāʾiq*, which I composed ten years ago, either I was deceitful and ignorant in all my lengthy and elaborate discussions or at that time I enjoyed a state that is no longer with me. Therefore, that was correct in relation to that time only. The issue now is in relation to the present time. And of course, the mystic lives at the moment, only. In every breath he only states and strives for that which is real at the moment. How well did he say when he said:

What magic can work against the ensnaring talisman of the vicissitudes of fortune?
Except patience, what other remedy is there against the wheel of time?
With all of this, what can I do with the sanguine wine?
Yesterday is gone, tomorrow is not clear, what about now?

555 – Should one speak, then they say: "He has claimed prophecy." Should one act with humility, then there is room for objection. Should one remain silent, then it is interpreted as a confession of heresy and of disbelief. Should one speak, then the listener should have a thousand ears. Alas, how strange! Verse:

There is no one like the wretched me
Who is disheartened by both seeing and not seeing you

In spite of this, they should not make any complaints because this longing is a long journey. How can one who objects understand my intention by intimating *Alwand* and *Māwashān*? Peace be upon him who said: How well did Zaynab hide her love from the people?

556 – A group of travelers saw Bāyazīd grabbing on to the knob on the door of the *kaʿba*. They said: did you leave your lord in Bistām? If he is yearning for Bistām, how can they understand what kind of point it is:

When I saw the tears, [I knew that] the tears revealed and betrayed me
They increased and added sadness to my sadness
I left all, but you, in their suspicions
I covered the face of love with love

If Moses, peace be upon him, yearned for mount Sinai, his yearning was not for dirt and pebbles. And if in the eternal *Qurʾān* he takes a vow on these two mountains, the Fig and the Olive (*al-tīn wa al-zaytūn*) that vow is not on the earth and stones.[609] Alas, no one except the lovers can understand the mysteries of love.

When you come turn your eyes to other than us
So they would assume that love is where you are looking

It takes someone with the qualities of Ibn ʿAbbās who can understand that taking such a vow is neither on the dirt nor the stones, nor day,

[609] *Qurʾān,* 95: 1–3.

nor night, and the stars. I swear by the night, the day, the sun, and the forenoon, indeed by the lord of all these.

557 – Dear friend! Be aware! Do not treat lightly the words of the lovers. "There is, in their stories, instruction for men endowed with understanding."[610] Behold, they are talking about Jacob. Do you think "And his eyes became white with sorrow. And he fell into silent melancholy"[611] is because of his separation from Joseph or for something else? If he was suffering this pain on account of Joseph then since it is permissible for the prophets to suffer such a pain, the entire world is justified in its longing for the friend. "How great is my grief for Joseph!"[612] This sigh means a different world of meaning for the Lord of love. In fact, that pain was not on behalf of Joseph. Joseph was a sign for another affair. Therefore, objections are not admissible. One should look at *Alwand* and *Māwashān*, and the tales of the lovers, with appreciation. This pain and complaint are not entirely about Hamadhān; they are about something else. Prison, is separation from the beloved; release, is finding the beloved.

558 – Here, I am not referring to myself. Nonetheless, I will say it, even though it is befitting if someone else talks about it so objections cannot be raised against him. There are many stations in love where the lover's complaints and pleads are pleasing to the beloved but not his patience. No one knows this but the lover. And not just anyone knows the extent of the world of love.

> The universe of love is vast, and your bosom is narrow
> The tale of love is long, and out of your reach

Do not forget that a grand master dismissed the patience that Ḥussayn Manṣūr Ḥallāj, may God be pleased with him, was enduring in his affliction. He said: A youth who is settled in his folly says, "Patience! Rely on God."

559 – O friend! You had written to me that an issue is not set aright with faint zeal and verbose decrees. I swear on the great God, that is indeed the case. Praise be upon him [who said]: O soul, love is forbidden to the unrighteous. Love and self-afflicted-humility have always existed together. What is love to the righteous! How distant am

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[610] Ibid., 12: 111.
[611] Ibid., 12: 84.
[612] Ibid.

I from the attributes of the chivalrous. I wish I did not invoke their name; it would have been to my advantage. This is the address from the ever-lasting One to the seekers:

> If you desire us, then plunge into sorrow!
> Like the bewildered, roam the world!
> Fill up your heart with sanguine tears poured into your eyes
> Then, after your eyes, give up your own life

560 – Shāfiʿī was ill and kept saying: O God! If my salvation is in this illness, increase it! When an important man wrote him from Yemen, stating: What do you have to do with affliction? Be aware! Lest, you do not repeat this. So, Shāfiʿī stopped that and prayed: O God! Also grant us peace and blessing. ʿAlī, Prince of the Faithful, was ill and sighed much. They asked him: What is all this wailing and crying for? He replied: I cannot be patient with him. I am afraid he will increase it.

561 – O friend! Concerning Mary—peace be upon her—they were saying: "His mother was truthful."[613] In spite of that, she became impatient and said: "Ah! Would that I had died before this! Would that I had been a thing forgotten and out of sight!"[614] You ask: What is this longing for Hamadhān? I am attached to Hamadhān. Should I say I am not?

> Indeed I cry because of my exile:
> The eyes of the stranger always cry,
> The day I left my land
> I was wrong
> I wonder why I left
> My homeland where my love is

O friend! I cannot talk about how this forced separation is the consequence of my voluntary departure. Can you hear [what I am telling you]!

> The one who is cast away from him is but his kin
> The one who leaves the land where his beloved is.

562 – I confess that content and patience in enduring the affliction that comes from the friend, are elevated states. What can I do since I do not

[613] Ibid., 5: 75.
[614] Ibid., 19: 23.

have these qualities? The one who does, may he delight in them! But this is not the subject of objection because it involves an array of issues. In the beginning beseeching God, all mighty, and complaining to Him, is a demand on the path. These sentiments in the most exalted stations, day-by-day, take on a thousand hues. Have you not heard this?

> We became desolate because of the enchanting locks of your hair
> We turned vagrant because of the violence of your teasing eyes
> Your tainted nature made you brutish
> We also by nature have become vexed now

No one except the lovers can recognize this tale:

> The locks of my idol incites a thousand passions
> The day they are not intent on stirring up mischief
> The day they wish to deceive by way of love
> They steal away hearts and souls and shed blood

563 – If there is any lack of acumen here, he asks himself to forgive himself out of generosity. We are excused out of this matter because others are the observers and we are the wounded. How easy is war for people who are watching. It is noble to contend with those who are scorched; it is far from wisdom to scold us. All the great ones would excuse us; and we are much in need of admitted forgiveness. They do not accept it when I say it. There is no other refuge but to escape toward the brothers.

> Do not make plans for this inconsiderate world
> Do not mention a word but the world is all mercy
> You asked: Where did you lose the train of thought?
> Beware with this tale! Do not lose your life

That is all. Praise to God the lord of the two worlds and His peace be upon Muḥammad and his family.

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# INDEX OF NAMES

**I – K**



**L – M**



**N – S**

# INDEX OF TERMS AND SUBJECTS

# INDEX OF PLACES

# ISLAMIC HISTORY AND CIVILIZATION

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1. Lev, Y. *State and Society in Fatimid Egypt*. 1991. ISBN 90 04 09344 3.
2. Crecelius, D. and ʿAbd al-Wahhab Bakr, trans. *Al-Damurdashi's Chronicle of Egypt, 1688-1755*. Al-Durra al Musana – Akhbar al-Kinana. 1991. ISBN 90 04 09408 3
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